

# **RECRUITMENT TO THE ALL VOLUNTEER FORCE**

**Final Technical Report  
by  
Gwyn Harries-Jenkins**

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**United States Army  
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**University of Hull**

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## **Recruitment to the All Volunteer Force**

**Gwyn Harries-Jenkins**  
University of Hull

**Research and Advanced Concepts Office**

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U.S. Army Research Institute  
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Jonathan Kaplan

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## **SUMMARY**

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**RECRUITMENT TO THE ALL VOLUNTEER FORCE**

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## **PREFACE**

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Writing in 1973 during the immediate aftermath of the decision to end the draft in the United States, Morris Janowitz concluded that while it was possible to take the position that the manpower and professional problems of a modern military could be solved by economic measures a different set of assumptions could be put forward.<sup>1</sup> These were based on the identification of the officer corps as a specialized profession and on the recognition of the career-enlisted ranks as a type of craft or skill group. The volunteer force (AVF) in a democratic society would require, and would obtain, pay competitive with civilian occupations, but the military, he argued strongly, was facing a professional dilemma which could not be solved by economic incentives alone. Not only did such incentives fail to guarantee the required mixture of numbers and quality of personnel, especially those who were highly motivated, but,

Military men do not want to think of themselves as mercenaries and a democratic society cannot treat its military as if they were mercenaries.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate solution, it appeared, was to recognise that the military profession required a sense of purpose, an operational logic and a basis for social cohesion. Whilst career commitment was no longer based on the heroic model of the traditional military officer, military professionals, it seemed, could not and did not operate as a group of technicians or administrators.

The Janowitz thesis with its considerable emphasis on the importance of this concept of the military professional was, subsequently, consistently reviewed. It is significant, however, that the two themes of the economic and social dimensions of recruitment to the all-volunteer force, continue, in the major analyses, to be of critical importance. These dimensions underpin, for example, the *Institutional/Occupational* model of the military as this was advanced by Charles Moskos in 1977.<sup>3</sup> His basic hypothesis argued that the institutional model associated with the mass army, and legitimized by its values and norms, was being replaced by an occupational model in which the army was legitimized by the economics of the market place. The twin dimension is also to be seen in much of the discussion in Segal's perceptive 1993 analysis of the post Cold-War American military.<sup>4</sup>

In this Report, we too stress the importance of these dimensions in the analysis of the practices and policies of Western European military establishments, together with the challenges they face, in the recruitment and retention of armed forces personnel. We recognise that the economic and social dimensions are conceptually distinctive, drawing upon very specific and, different underlying theories and concepts. We note, however, that there is a complex inter-relationship between them. No decision can be effectively taken in a single dimension which ignores its effect upon the second. It is not a zero-sum game.

### **The Economic Dimension**

To the economist, the specific case of recruitment to the military is part of the wider and more general study of labour economics. Military personnel, in this context, provide the labour and human capital inputs into the production function. Acquiring and retaining the quality and quantity of necessary personnel is, fundamentally, a procurement problem. Military organizations, in common with other private and public sector employers, are subject to the law of supply and demand. As one of the larger buyers of labour in the open market, the military is particularly affected by the vagaries of market forces. Coincidentally, the nature of the product encourages a critical evaluation of the benefits and disadvantages of military service. As the military becomes an increasingly technologically oriented organization, it also finds itself more and more in direct competition with other employers for suitably qualified personnel.

Military establishments, however, do not operate in a neutral and value-free environment. The issue of recruitment and retention has to be addressed in the context of the defence economics problem as a whole. Faced with constant or falling defence budgets and the rising cost of sophisticated equipment, governments are reluctant, or unable, to rely on monetary incentives alone to encourage the recruitment and ensure the retention of personnel. Accordingly, as Hartley points out, personnel choices, in common with other defence choices are determined by four key economic principles:

- A focus on final outputs and not inputs.
- Substitution.
- Efficiency incentives.
- Public choice and the military-political-industrial complex.

Even so, as he continues (p.5)

Acquiring personnel is a procurement problem embracing choices about what to buy (quantity and quality: numbers and skills), where to buy from (i.e. nationals or others) and how to buy (i.e. choice of employment contract).

### **The Social Dimension**

To the social scientists, recruitment to and retention in the all-volunteer force is a subtle and complex issue. As we have noted in an earlier CRMI Project Report, *The Western European Military Establishment: A Re-Assessment*<sup>5</sup> the persistent problem for European military establishments in this area is that this military is a prisoner of its past. A number of immediate questions arise:

- do the basic features of an advanced industrial society inhibit the recruitment of volunteers to the military?
- does the growth of the welfare state encourage a shift away from those traditional patterns of recruitment which relied heavily on the disproportionate enlistment of personnel from marginalised and disadvantaged groups?
- is a career in the contemporary military sufficiently attractive to potential young recruits?
- are recruitment and retention rates affected by the force structure of European armed forces now and in the future?

To examine these and other issues, we have concentrated on three particular facets of the social dimensions of recruitment and retention:

- The Professional Dilemma
- The Force Structure
- Civil-Military Relations

Our approach initially identifies the variables which affect recruitment and retention in what can be termed "The Post-Modern Military". Put briefly, these can be expressed in the formula (Boëne):

$$E = \int (D, U, \frac{W}{C}, B, R, T)$$

where E is *enlistment*; D is *demographics*; U is the *level of unemployment*  $\frac{w}{c}$  is the *ratio of civilian wages to the military salary*; B are *benefits in kind*; R are the *resources of recruitment* and T is the *taste for military life*.

Some of these variables are essentially objective, closely resembling the data used in the economists' approach to the issue. *Demographics*, for example identify not only the current and future trends of population statistics in Western Europe but, more importantly, draw attention to the size of that age cohort which is the most suitable source of recruitment. Others are more subjective. This is especially marked with regard to "T" - *the taste for military life*. The propensity to select a military career in preference to a civilian post, need not necessarily be a reflection of rational choice. We note, at the same time, that objective data may be interpreted subjectively. Thus the ratio of civilian wages to the military salary ( $\frac{w}{c}$ ) may be a matter of factual record, but interpretation of the data will often be conditional on an individual's sense of relative deprivation.

From the case studies which constitute a major part of this Report, we can provisionally conclude that satisfactory military personnel policies are directly linked to what may be termed the ASPIC factor:

- A Alteration of goals and objectives
- S Substitution between personnel.
- P Privatization and civilianization.
- I Internationalization.
- C Changes to conditions of service.

Whereas the previously noted variables are primarily external to the military, the ASPIC factor is an expression of change **within** the military establishment. It is a constant cycle of change, to the extent that the turbulence and uncertainty which it creates are, in themselves, a determinant of successful recruitment and retention. Yet such change is perhaps inevitable, reminding us of the emphasis placed by Janowitz on the *sense of purpose* and the *operational logic* of the AVF. "Inevitable", because as Dandeker notes:

War among the advanced industrial societies becomes a remote possibility, yet the world will still remain a violent planet where traditional inter-state war is supplanted by civil wars, ethnic, tribal and regional conflicts that cut across state boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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## INTRODUCTION



## **RECRUITMENT TO THE AVF**

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In contemporary Western Europe, questions of recruitment to the military arise within the context of what has been termed 'The Post-Modern Military'. For much of the Cold War, especially from the early 1960s onwards, the continuance of a policy of mutual nuclear deterrence increased the stability of the bi-polar system and lessened the risk of total war. Major confrontation had to be avoided because 'it could not sensibly be fought'.<sup>1</sup> Armed forces were primarily trained for a war that nobody expected to fight and where the outbreak of hostilities would be a major failure of the strategy of deterrence. Yet, at the same time, a traditional European fear of cross-frontier invasion encouraged the retention of the mass army. Originating in the large-scale armed forces which conducted military operations in the nineteenth century, recruitment to this army was inextricably linked to compulsory military service. The system of general conscription which characterised the *levée en masse* of the French Revolution was retained. The tradition of a *Volk in Waffen*, a nation in arms, died hard. The small amount of military action which did take place, however, was limited in its aims and objectives, the use of resources and in its duration. Confrontation occurred on the periphery of areas of marginal strategic interest, in situations which favoured the use of highly skilled professional troops rather than short term conscripts. This experience, accompanied by the growth of détente, led many Western European military establishments to search for a revised role and function. In the aftermath of 1989, in particular, the peace dividend encouraged the conclusion that armed forces could be 'smaller but better'.

In the consequent downsizing of these forces, the logic of retaining a degree of conscription became suspect. The decline of the mass army, however, and the identification of an alternative and more appropriate force structure based not on conscription but on the zero draft, did not result solely, or even primarily, from reductions in total manpower. Nor was détente the only justification for a major structural change. The underlying reasons were complex and fundamental<sup>2</sup>. The declining legitimacy of the armed forces, more apparent in some countries than others<sup>3</sup>, the reaction of a younger generation to conscription, the institutionalization of conflict<sup>4</sup> and basic socio-economic considerations were some of the reasons which were advanced to explain a growing preference for the introduction of the all-volunteer force. But it is not the purpose of this research to provide a review of the decline of the mass army. A number of studies with an extensive bibliography already exist. What concerns us in this research is the aftermath of the shift from the mass army based on conscription to the all-volunteer force. In particular, we are concerned with the critical and basic issue of recruitment to that force in Western Europe.

## The Background

Concern with the problems of recruitment to an all-volunteer force (AVF) is no new phenomenon. In the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom for example faced consistent shortages of suitable volunteers to its relatively small army. Apart from relying on those who were compelled, as in the 1840s, to join the military through economic necessity, foreign "legion" troops were employed in the Crimean War. In subsequent campaigns considerable reliance was placed on the availability of colonial forces. Even so, major structural changes occurred in 1870 (the Cardwell reforms) and in 1908 when Haldane established the Territorial Army in parallel with the Regular Army<sup>5</sup>. In both instances, it was acknowledged that a major reason for change was the difficulty of attracting suitably qualified recruits to the all-volunteer regular army.

Comparable problems were to be found in the United States at this time. Perret, in critically examining the structure of armed forces in the United States after the Revolutionary Wars of the eighteenth century, notes that the small regular all-volunteer force between 1815 and the Civil War depended very much on the recruitment of immigrants. This army,

...probably had a higher proportion of educated and talented men than any other military force in the world. Many of

them were immigrants eager to establish themselves in American life; educated men seeking a fresh start. For half a century the army did what the schools would later do – turn immigrants into Americans. Besides, most of them were too old to go to school.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequently, Emery Upton and his successor in the United States concluded that the viable alternative to the mass armies of Europe recruited by conscription, was not a large sized AVF persistently short of personnel, but a small technologically advanced force. This military would exploit the advantages of American technology through using superior firepower.

In both the United Kingdom and the United States, the problem of recruiting to the AVF during a major confrontation was solved through the introduction of temporary conscription. Such a change of traditional policy was very rational for it did enable both countries to put large armies into the field. The beneficiaries of the policy tended to forget, however, that in times of peace, the legitimacy of the draft outwith Continental Europe was very suspect. Accordingly, by the 1970s the options open to the United Kingdom and the United States in their search for a force to balance the mass armies of the Soviet bloc, did not include the retention of a military recruited through conscription. Instead, there were two possibilities. On the one hand, the mass Warsaw Pact armies could be matched in numbers by the retention of large sized AVF forces in the United Kingdom and the United States. For the former, however, historical data analysed as a time series indicated that the recruitment of an adequate number of volunteers to such a force would be highly unlikely. An examination of trends in recruitment in the twentieth century, identified for the United Kingdom three significant propositions:

- In peacetime, the absolute size of the all-volunteer force consistently declines over time.
- Over the years, the size of the all-volunteer force as a proportion of the adult working population consistently declines.
- For the all-volunteer force, the military participation ratio (MPR) relative to men and women of appropriate age declines over time.

These explanatory propositions were derived from a developmental analysis which entailed historical reconstruction, trend specification and the establishment of a future model towards which actual results were progressing.

For the United States the likelihood of the military being able to recruit an adequate number of suitable personnel to the AVF was, however, considered in more specific detail by the **Gates Commission**.<sup>7</sup> The reached conclusions were favourable to implementing a policy of a zero draft but, subsequently, Morris Janowitz succinctly summarised the underlying realities:

The basic features of an advanced industrialized society create problems in the recruitment and management of military manpower.....The rise of the welfare state with unemployment compensation and social security payments, plus mass education (also) undermine the traditional system of recruitment. Those who can be impressed into military service because of sheer poverty are fewer in number and marginal persons have the alternative benefits of the welfare

state. To the extent that the military faces declining opportunities to be stationed abroad, both the tasks of recruitment and the maintenance of military morale become more and more complex.<sup>8</sup>

The immediate alternative was to rely to a greater extent on the advantages spelt out by the Upton doctrine, that is, to create a technologically advanced force (TAF) which would be "smaller but better". Such a force, in utilising the advantages of superior firepower, would then counter the numerical advantages of mass armies. This strategy had much to commend it, not least the political benefits accruing from a shift away from a mass army, irrespective of its being recruited through conscription or volunteering, to a smaller and more professional military. What tended to be overlooked, however, were the realities of civil-military competition for suitably qualified personnel. Such realities were admirably demonstrated by Moskos in his subsequent formulation of the occupational/institutional dichotomy.<sup>9</sup> The problem was not only one of **numbers**, but also one of **quality**.

At the turn of the century, however, the debate has moved on. The normative question raised in the 1970s as to whether armed forces **should** shift from conscription to the AVF, is no longer an issue of major concern. It is increasingly accepted that a significant characteristic of the post-modern military is the rejection of the draft as the basis of recruitment. The contemporary problem is linked with the transformation of military action. Most countries in Western Europe have embraced a change of doctrine which acknowledges the disappearance of the former Soviet threat. The consequence of this is clearly spelt out by Boëne and Dandeker:

While nuclear weapons are still there to structure global politics (at least in part) the Atlantic Alliance has moved from a strategy of deterrence to a strategy of action.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst, in theory, the order of defence priorities (the maintenance of sovereignty, the protection of the nation-state, participation in appropriate alliances to counter major external threats, and the promotion of wider national interests) remains unchanged, in reality, contemporary armed forces increasingly adopt a **constabulary** role. Western European nations join with the United States in assuming responsibility for the 'policing' of an imperfect international order. Many of the military operations which this entails, are by their very nature both multinational and multifunctional. The objectives of being continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seeking viable international relations rather than victory because armed forces incorporate a protective military position, give rise to an alternative military image.<sup>11</sup> The significance of the latter is particularly marked in operations where the safety of the involved personnel is seen to be more important than the mission itself. Similarly, military operations which are essentially humanitarian in purpose, tend to de-emphasize violence whilst stressing the need for the utilisation of alternative and often non-military skills.

These support operations have served to confer on armed forces an enhanced legitimacy. They entail many tasks which are essentially non-military in nature, bringing officers and other ranks into contact with local politicians and civilians in a manner highly reminiscent of the practices inherent in the implementation of the **gendarmerie** role in former European colonies.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, armed forces in most Western European countries today enjoy a much enhanced status and much improved public image derived from both this historical tradition and the modified contemporary role. Increasingly, they find themselves in a situation where their organizational skills and functional ability are much in demand. Yet, paradoxically, this does not guarantee that the military can attract an adequate number of suitably qualified recruits, particularly for rank and file enlistment.

A pessimistic interpretation of this paradox recognizes the inevitability of poor rates of recruitment and retention in contemporary Western European military establishments. A strong case can be made to support the thesis that a significant characteristic of modern citizenship is the reluctance of, if not the refusal by the majority of citizens to take up arms in defence of their country. Armed forces may be accorded an enhanced status. The military, today, in contrast with the past, may enjoy a much improved public image but it is still an organization which the individual has no intention of joining. It is, in popular comment, a responsibility which is "not in my back-yard".

A more objective analysis by Segal and his colleagues of accession and personnel policies in the United States explores this paradox in greater detail.<sup>13</sup> In examining the influence of these policies on changing cultural and military opinion in the United States, attention is drawn to a number of critical areas:

- The extent to which the all-volunteer force emphasises distinctive values and attitudes.
- The manner in which a more career-oriented force has helped transform the military from a vocation/calling to a job/occupation.
- The development of a specific type of military professionalism which differentiates sharply practitioners from non-practitioners.
- The potential isolation of the military from the parent society.
- The growth of a broader cultural divide between the American armed forces and the civilian society.
- The emergence of an underclass military.

In accepting that these variables are critical determinants of the success or failure of accession and personnel policies for the military in the United States, the immediate question is the extent to which they are equally applicable to the Western European situation. To this there is no readily available answer. Our previous studies for the **Comparative Research into Military Institutions (CRMI)** project, "Leadership for Change" (ARI Contract N 68171-98-M5540) invites the conclusion that these variables are important determinants of recruitment to Western European all-volunteer forces, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We would also conclude that retention rates within these forces are equally affected by the interplay of these factors. Nevertheless, it is necessary to explore European experience in greater detail if we are to understand more fully the policies, practices and problems affecting the AVF in Western Europe. In doing this, a number of primary questions can be identified:

- An initial issue is the extent to which the critical variables of accession and recruitment to which Segal and his colleagues refer, equally affect the strategies and success of recruitment policies in Western Europe.
- A complementary issue is the extent to which European armed forces are affected by alternative or unique variables.
- A fundamental question is the identification of the relationship between these variables and the ability of European military establishments to meet quantitative and qualitative manpower targets.

- A final and most important question is the identification of the strategies adopted by these establishments to counter the difficulties which they meet in recruiting personnel to, and retaining them in, the all-volunteer force.

## THE CONTEXT OF THE ALL-VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

An accepted premise of the peace dividend was that both defence budgets and military force levels would be sharply reduced by the shift from the Mass Army to the AVF. As in the United States in 1969 and early 1970, it was assumed in a number of European countries that a volunteer system would meet defence requirements.<sup>14</sup> It was also assumed that armed forces would be able to recruit and retain a sufficient number of new enlistees to meet service strength authorizations and that the quality of new accessions would be satisfactory. For the post-modern military, however, there are a number of problematic areas which impact upon these basic assumptions:

- Economic criteria
- The Professional Dilemma
- Force structure
- Civil-military relations

### Economic Criteria

Econometric data has been used in a number of studies of the all-volunteer force. For the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, the critical question under review was that of the relative costs of the draft versus the AVF.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, once the decision had been taken to abolish the draft and there was experience, in practice, of these relative costs, the focus of concern shifted to the analysis of the question, 'Does defence beggar welfare?'.<sup>16</sup> In the consequent review of the **opportunity** costs of maintaining the AVF in being, attention tended to focus on the comparative examination of public expenditure in selected Western military establishments. In recent years, more sophisticated analyses have sought to tease out the comparative cost efficiency of these establishments. As armed forces are reducing their manpower in response to the search for a credible "peace dividend", a basic question is whether these forces are used efficiently.<sup>17</sup> Although the primary reason for asking such a question is the search for significant financial savings in the defence budget, the potential human resource saving is equally important. If there are major difficulties in recruiting an adequate number of suitably qualified personnel, then it is logical to seek ways in which those who are recruited are used with greater efficiency.

In these debates little consideration has been given, however, to the direct link between economic variables and recruitment. A primary concern has consistently been the question of the overall high manpower costs of the AVF. In 1973, for example, a report of the **West German Force Structure Commission** projected that about 6.2% of the Gross National Product would have to be spent on a professional all-volunteer Bundeswehr compared with the 4.7% spent on a conscript army with a volunteer content of just under 53%.<sup>18</sup> Conscription has always seemed to be cheap in budgetary terms even though it is an inefficient method of recruitment which fails to reflect the true opportunity cost. The conclusion that the abolition of conscription would raise the relative costs of military manpower but that this would encourage substitution between capital (weapons) and labour, has, however, been countered by the argument that, "the luxury of a volunteer force may be beyond the fiscal means of a social welfare state".<sup>19</sup> Repeatedly, studies have focussed on the economic consequences of switching from the draft to the AVF in terms of the direct budgetary costs.<sup>20</sup>

For contemporary all-volunteer forces, however, it is the economics underlying recruitment which are of critical importance. Overall budgetary costs remain an issue of political and military concern, but in the specific field of the accession and retention of personnel, other economic issues arise. One of the major uncertainties is thus the link between the level of military pay and the level of recruitment. One contention argues that shortfalls in recruiting can be directly related to the difficulty of competing in the open labour market for suitably qualified personnel. Since this difficulty is readily associated with levels of military remuneration, this is a popular explanation within the armed forces. It justifies demands for increased rates of pay for recruits. By extension, it rationalises the use of enhanced rates of pay and other rewards to retain personnel. It is also popular in more senior levels of the military establishment since increased personnel costs can be attributed to the effect of external market factors rather than be seen as the effect of their conscious choice of resource allocation. It is, of course, by no means a novel explanation. In 1969 and in 1974, percentage increases in remuneration were specifically requested in the United Kingdom by the Ministry of Defence because of existing manpower shortages and continued recruitment shortfalls. A major consequence of this was the introduction in 1969 of the **military salary** in accordance with the recommendations of the **Second Report of the National Board for Prices and Incomes** (1969). This brought into being the notion of comparability between earnings in the civilian sector and rates of pay in the armed forces.<sup>21</sup> It also resulted in the incorporation of many allowances into basic rates of pay, whilst coincidentally bringing in the principle of charging a realistic amount for such benefits as accommodation, food and clothing. As we shall see later this was a major characteristic of the transformation of the military from **institution** to **occupation**, a change which has a not inconsiderable effect upon rates of recruitment and retention.

The extent to which the rates of remuneration in the military does affect levels of recruitment and retention is not agreed. In the past, official policy contended that it was far from certain that enhanced rates of pay in the AVF were a primary determinant of the level of recruitment and retention. Thus for the United Kingdom, it was argued in the **Report of the Grigg Committee** in 1958 that neither did a given rate of remuneration constitute a deterrent to recruitment nor did an increase necessarily attract recruits of the right quality.<sup>22</sup> A contrary conclusion, however, has been reached in the few economic studies of enlistment to the all-volunteer force. Recruitment was found to depend upon pay and unemployment. Increases in the latter were estimated to have a positive influence upon enlistment, particularly in the army. Similarly, high civilian wages relative to military remuneration had a predicted negative effect upon enlistment (an elasticity of -1.5) but absolute levels of military pay had a positive impact.<sup>23</sup> Recruiting, it would seem, is very sensitive to the degree to which the AVF offers wages which are competitive with the civil sector.

The experience of other crisis organizations when faced with recruiting problems, provides a further commentary on the link between levels of pay and levels of recruitment. Police forces, in particular, tend to adopt an **occupational** rather than an **institutional** stance, arguing that the nature of their task and its attendant risks justifies the payment of the high rates of remuneration needed to attract recruits. An institutional image with its emphasis on service and calling, however, is still associated with the reluctance in hospitals to increase rates of remuneration, notwithstanding problems of recruitment and retention. It is significant that for nurses, there is a tendency to favour both job enrichment and job enlargement as a means of motivation rather than simply rely on increases in pay.

Nevertheless, for contemporary all-volunteer forces, a number of areas of uncertainty imply that the relationship between levels of recruitment and rates of military remuneration continues to be complex:

- Although a highly sophisticated system can be established to create and maintain the principles of pay comparability as an inducement to recruitment

and retention, the system itself cannot eradicate individual perceptions of imagined exploitation and relative deprivation.

- Armed forces are rational-legal bureaucratic structures in which the promise of promotion on the basis of seniority and ability or some combination of these, does little to fill immediate skill shortages.
- The multi-functional role of the post-modern military favours policies of differential reward; the basic demand within a bureaucracy is for uniformity.
- The policy of providing a universal socially just reward for members of the armed forces on the basis of comparability plus a compensatory payment (the "x-factor"), cannot readily adjust to market pressures.
- Despite a general shift towards an occupational culture, the AVF in its recruiting strategies retains traditional policies which stress the importance of deferred gratification rather than immediate reward.

The fundamental problem is that uncertainty in the field of remuneration for the all-volunteer army does little to facilitate military recruitment. The notion of social justice, for example, is founded on specific normative considerations which may or may not reflect economic rationality. Pay and reward are accordingly determined not by a global figure representing what is needed to compete in the market place but by shifts in a civilian labour wages policy over which the military has no control. Consequently, personnel costs absorb an increasing percentage of the defence budget, irrespective of their relevance to issues of recruitment and retention. The British experience suggests that the pay policy which is adopted for the AVF strives to be all things to all people. It has the objectives at one and the same time of competing for recruits in a civilian labour market, of retaining suitable trained personnel, of implementing a career structure and of providing a socially just reward for service personnel. Consequently, when resources are limited there is very little discretionary choice. A shift of emphasis to meet identified policy needs becomes difficult, if not impossible.

### **The Professional Dilemma**

In further analysing the issues of recruitment and retention in the all-volunteer force, economic criteria are only of the determining factors. The social implications of alterations in traditional patterns of accession and career are equally important in their effect. Indeed, it can be argued that social rather than economic concerns are the primary causes of personnel problems today.

The contemporary European AVF seeks to recruit a not insubstantial proportion of the qualified and eligible in each annual age cohort. Traditionally, this was a percentage of about three in ten eligible males; today, military establishments, unable to meet this target, increasingly look to previously excluded groups as potential recruits. The success of integrating such recruits into the AVF is not guaranteed and the media quickly draws attention to the problems which arise. As we have noted in previous research, however, it is inevitable that the European AVF will increasingly have to cope with such problems, not least because of the implications of European Community, if not national, legislation. Sophisticated recruiting strategies can be used to attract a wide range of recruits, but discrimination within the AVF, if it is not checked, can quickly lead to disillusionment and disaffection. It is to be noted in passing, however, that many aspects of this discrimination disappear where troops form distinctive units such as the Gurkhas (United Kingdom) or the Foreign Legion (France).



All these recruits irrespective of their background are affected by generally applicable social factors. Of these, a persistent strain is associated with the **professional dilemma** experienced by all military personnel. In analyses of armed forces there has been a tendency, particularly in studies which adopt a sociological stance, to equate 'professional' with officership. In our analysis, however, the concept is used in its wider context. Accordingly, recruitment and, by extension, retention in the European AVF can be seen to be substantially affected by three generally applicable interpretations of the professional military self-image.

### 1. The concept of service.

This, the most traditional of the various interpretations of the professional self-image of the volunteer army, puts considerable emphasis on the importance of "service to society". Whilst the presence of the concept is often most clearly evidenced in the attitudes of volunteers in reserve units, it is still present in the culture of the AVF. The activities which this force undertakes can accordingly be legitimated by reference to their institutional and societal values; individual self-interest is seen to be less important than the need to co-operate for the public good. This, as we have noted, is often linked to the high status afforded to the military for their involvement in humanitarian missions.

### 2. The technical expertise of armed forces.

Greatly favoured within the AVF, especially by officers and senior NCOs, this image recognises the high level of technical and specialist abilities of military personnel. The claims of individuals to prestige, reward and status are legitimated, not only in terms of military service as a calling, but also in terms of the expertise, commitment and responsibility of members of the armed forces.

### 3. The uniqueness of the military.

Whilst other members of the public service can equally draw attention to their sense of calling with its associated rejection of reward as the sole motivator, the military, as a crisis organization, can claim to be unique. Equally, whilst other organizations can exhibit technical skills comparable with those to be found in the military, armed forces with their monopoly of violence have a role which is essentially different.

In each instance recruitment and retention are very much affected by individual reaction to the projected professional image. Thus the concept of service with its emphasis on such qualities as "honour"; "duty"; "patriotism", may have been a basis of past recruitment but, today, it is increasingly replaced by the conclusion that the military is "just a job". Accordingly, service in the armed forces is evaluated in comparison with civilian experience. A shift to a situation in which service in the military is legitimated in terms of the market-place, implies that potential recruits are usually motivated by self-interest rather than by the notion of professional obligations. If this be so, then many features of the military way of life deter a number of would be applicants.

- **military culture** seemingly continues to be linked to the core values, rituals and heroes of the single, blue collar macho male. Media references to racial and sexual harassment within the armed forces, together with reports of acute homophobia, combine to portray a less than inviting working place. Nor is the portrayed culture of officers greatly different in respect to harassment; there is also evidence of considerable role confusion.<sup>24</sup>



- **family life** is a major variable in the decision-making process of members, actual or potential, of the AVF. The degree of turbulence resulting from the need for individual mobility considerably affects family life. Overstretch has increased the sense of stress. At the same time, partners are reluctant to sacrifice careers and employment opportunities to accompany posted personnel. A preference for a stable family life in a civilian environment reduces the attractions of a traditional military life on post.<sup>25</sup>
- **mission** objectives no longer provide an immediate rationale for accepting the less pleasant aspects of military life. The sense of uncertainty amongst personnel as to their purpose, affects rates of retention more than rates of recruitment. Peacekeeping, in particular, is an inherently ambiguous process.<sup>26</sup> A lack of clarity engenders a degree of confusion which limits individual commitment to the military organization.

In each of these three areas it is important to distinguish between media presentation and reality. For recruitment and retention, however, it may be that facts are often less important than feelings. Amongst military personnel in the AVF there is a very well developed sense of relative deprivation which is encouraged by the status of the military as a total institution.

Paradoxically, the emphasis placed in European all-volunteer forces on their high level of technical expertise can decrease rather than increase levels of recruitment. A major attraction of a military career to many potential recruits is the opportunity for acquiring technical skills, preferably validated by qualifications which are recognized in civilian employment. Training to acquire such skills may not immediately materialize; the occupational specialism of the recruited soldier may have little relevance to a future post-military career. Whilst the consequent sense of dissatisfaction may directly affect levels of retention rather than of accession, negative feedback can deter would-be recruits. For those who do benefit from the sophisticated training programmes available in the AVF, many over time find that they possess highly marketable personal skills. This accompanied by the multi-functional experience gained in peacekeeping, humanitarian and similar operations, encourages them to look outwith the military for an early second career.

In many respects, however, the more significant issues of recruitment to the AVF arise from the continuing uniqueness of the military way of life. Although the military image may have changed radically from the time when the military profession was identified primarily with the concept of service for the common good, many of the less attractive features of military service persist. Moskos has succinctly summarised the more traditional of these:

One thinks of the extended tours abroad; the fixed terms of enlistment; liability for 24-hour service availability; frequent movements of self and family; subjection to military discipline and law; and, inability to resign, strike or negotiate over working conditions.<sup>27</sup>

Moskos originally identified these characteristics in 1977; little has changed since. These are apparently the enduring features of military life which have persisted over the centuries. Those who are currently serving in the contemporary AVF in Europe can add some more: longer periods of separation from families as the military is given more tasks with fewer resources; an insistence on higher moral standards than those to be found in society at large; increased bureaucratisation and limited autonomy; and – being called upon to fight.

Underlying this is the persistent range of problems faced by European all-volunteer forces in meeting world-wide commitments with a reduced force structure. The wish to provide service personnel with a reasonable balance between overseas and home service cannot

eradicate the turbulence caused by overstretch. This turbulence is considerably in excess of that experienced by most members of the civilian community and it is a major contributory factor to the social and physical isolation of military personnel and their families. Inevitably it has a major impact on recruitment and retention. The basic characteristic of the post-modern military is that it is a mobile force; accordingly, the AVF was established on the premise that it would be able to act quickly in the satisfaction of defence commitments. This, in turn, implied that the ideal-type AVF would comprise only personnel who would be free from extraneous obligations and responsibilities which would constrain the expected degree of mobility. The ideal member of the military would be single, living on base, and totally committed to the need to be available for duty twenty-four hours a day.

The reality is very different. In European all-volunteer forces an increasing number of personnel are married or have long term partners; there are strong social and economic pressures to live outside the military cantonment as members of a civilian community, whilst a well developed sense of relative deprivation encourages a more limited commitment to the expectation of "total service". In many instances, the total force strength is paralleled by a greater number of dependants. In this context, there is a significant move away from the traditional concept of the single soldier. Forty years ago, a number of disincentives to early marriage existed in the all-volunteer force. In the United Kingdom, for example, full marriage allowance was not given to enlisted men below the age of 21 or to officers below the age of 25; nor was married accommodation provided officially for personnel below these ages. These disincentives, however, were removed with the introduction in 1969 of the military salary and, at the same time, more married quarters became available. The specific rationale for these changes in the one case has a much wider applicability in the general context of recruitment to the AVF:

If we are to attract and retain sufficient recruits, we must not only offer good pay and a decent career; the Serviceman must also be well-housed. Although much has been accomplished in recent years, we still have a lot to do.....<sup>28</sup>

Since then, particularly in the last decade, the provisions of equal opportunity legislation have modified considerably this picture of the married man living with his family in allocated accommodation. Nevertheless, many of the conclusions reached in the **Report of the Army Welfare Inquiry Committee** in the United Kingdom in 1976 (The Spencer Report) continue to be pertinent. The Report provides a detailed analysis of the social difficulties which are experienced by both officers and enlisted personnel and their families. The general observation of the Report was that matrimonial and family problems formed the largest matter of concern for AVF personnel. Above all, the Report stressed that "the consequences of loneliness stand out as a major problem".<sup>29</sup> One part of the Report is of particular significance, for it portrays a situation which continues to be a disincentive to the recruiting and retention of members of the AVF:

The isolation felt by the wives of junior ranks is particularly noticeable. Some of this, no doubt, is caused by their having very young children to care for; much of it however is compounded by their high rates of separation and turbulence. the system for allocating married accommodation, an inability drive, a lack of social amenities and, of course, stress produced by their new relationships without having the ready assistance of their mothers to hand when difficulties arise.<sup>30</sup>

In the British all-volunteer force at this time, success in helping individuals overcome these difficulties depended on the quality of the traditional system of regimental care and assistance. Today, however, while such an amateur system has much to commend it, it is necessary to establish an alternative. One reason for this is the more general realisation within contemporary European society that the possible intensity of such stress, demands a more professional and comprehensive approach. A second reason peculiar to the military is a shift away from traditional roles for women. There is, for example, increasing evidence of the importance of paid employment to women associated with armed forces not only as wives and partners of military personnel, but also in their own right. There is, accordingly, a sense of major dissatisfaction among those who want such employment but find that the opportunities for this are very limited, particularly when units are stationed outwith mainland Britain. At the same time, this demand for employment, especially amongst the wives and partners of senior NCOs and officers, is a real change from the traditional expectation that they should accept responsibility as a major provider of care and assistance within the unit. A limited number are now prepared to subordinate their own careers to accept those commitments which were traditionally seen as an extension of the role of the spouse within the force structure.

In establishing a more comprehensive system of care and assistance, the contemporary AVF, however, is faced by a major dilemma. Such a system can be justified on economic grounds if it is an aid to recruitment and retention, but a primary question is the extent to which resources **should** be diverted to meet the needs of military families. Associated with this question is a whole range of subsidiary but no less important issues. The operational tasks of the European all-volunteer forces are most readily satisfied by the recruitment and retention of a small and mobile professional military. Does the provision of extensive support facilities encourage early marriage and partnerships which reduces the mobility of that force? Does the AVF in contemporary society continue to have a responsibility for the provision of facilities which for the employees of other organizations are a responsibility of the state? Or is the custodial and paternalistic style of management which is implicit in such provision at variance with a concept of military professionalism that stresses, *inter alia*, the importance of individual responsibility and commitment?

The critical question for the AVF is one of balance. Is the military a professional mobile fighting force or an ancillary social welfare agency? Given that the problems of mobility, family separation and turbulence are endemic features of a crisis organization geared to a rapid response strategy, at what point does concern with the implications of this for recruitment and retention distort the realities of operational requirements? There is a very real danger that in stressing the convergence of the AVF with other organizations in terms of pay and conditions of service, that this overlooks the divergence of the military in terms of its tasks.

To these and similar questions, there are no simple answers. What is certain is that the problems associated with such social issues as the harsh realities of the demands of mobility, increased family separation and persistent turbulence, create very real constraints on the successful recruitment to, and retention of, personnel in European all-volunteer forces.

### **Force structure**

The shift from a **strategy of deterrence** to a **strategy of action** for the post-modern military materially affects public attitudes towards the contemporary AVF. In turn, these and comparable reactions within the AVF affect recruitment and retention. As we have noted, a greater military involvement in **humanitarian** operations enhances the status of the armed forces in the parent society, greater participation in **active** operations does not, however, necessarily have the same effect. In operations such as Kosovo, technology has made the conduct of these campaigns so transparent that increased public evaluation of the role and

function of the AVF is inevitable.<sup>31</sup> Such evaluation is not necessarily favourable for, "when war ceases to be connected to national survival, it loses its reservoir of support among the citizens".<sup>32</sup> This loss of support can be most marked when inexperienced troops, employed in a constabulary role, are severely criticised by the media for their behaviour on and off duty.

The European all-volunteer force has, accordingly, to establish an acceptable and viable force structure against this background of critical external evaluation and questionable public support. It is a structure which has to be viable in that it enables the military to meet successfully its aims and objectives; it has to be acceptable in that it attracts sufficient recruits and retains enough personnel to allow it to perform. The AVF in devising this structure encounters a number of problems. The introduction of the internal market through devolved budgeting has encouraged critical reviews of any projected structure.<sup>33</sup> The consequent cost control initiatives, however, do not necessarily result in the promotion of successful recruiting strategies. This is particularly noticeable when the search for cost efficiency removes many of the traditional attractions of a military career in terms of benefits and privileges.

With regard to recruitment, the design of an appropriate force structure is immediately affected by the need to link this structure to an expanding range of functional capabilities. The European AVF, for example, cannot specialise in peacekeeping nor, indeed, can it establish specialist and earmarked peacekeeping forces. Such a policy might improve its public standing, though the effect on recruitment would be uncertain. At the same time, greater reliance on multi-national co-operation in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions may ensure task and goal attainment, but there is no guarantee that potential AVF recruits will be attracted to serve in a mixed force structure. Indeed, the basic characteristics of national military cultures imply that any force structure which weakens the status of the primary group with its rituals, heroes, symbols and values, will be unpopular both to recruits and to serving personnel.

Given that more and more demands are placed on European all-volunteer forces than were ever contemplated a decade ago, recruiting and retention difficulties assume an increasing importance. This does not mean that the AVF in European countries is in a state of crisis. Recruitment policies have facilitated a smooth transition from the mass army with a conscript component to the smaller but more professional all-volunteer force. In many fields – the integration of homosexuals; the adoption of equal opportunity policies; race relations; and the maintenance of moral standards – armed forces continue to pioneer change and development. Unit effectiveness is no less than it was in the conscript army. The continuing problem, however, is the need to ensure that the **quality** and **quantity** of recruits are sufficient.

In the light of this problem, two aspects of their force structure are of increasing importance for European all-volunteer armed forces. A primary question is the identification of the appropriate balance between regular and reserve forces. As we have seen, the probability of an easy transition from the mass army based on conscription to the smaller professional AVF involved two basic presumptions. Firstly, it was presumed that future operations would not necessitate the employment of the number of troops which had characterised the mass army. "Smaller but better" armed forces would suffice. Secondly, it was presumed that "better" could be defined in terms of technological developments within the AVF, and of the latter's overall weapons superiority. At the same time, substantial components of the country's total military capability could be organized in reserve formations. In many respects this was a reversion to traditional patterns of **mobilization under threat**. When it was necessary, an enlarged military force could be created by calling up reserve units or individual reservists for active duty.<sup>34</sup>

The experience of the Gulf War and the subsequent use of reserves in situations other than the traditional reserve function of defending the homeland, has been a major commentary upon the extent to which these contemporary reserve units and formations **can** substitute for regular all-volunteer forces. **Quantitatively**, there is little reason to doubt the availability of a sufficient number of reserve units and individuals, though their conscription in time of need can encourage individual resignations. **Qualitatively**, however, there is some concern that such reserves lack the front-line experience of regular units; this recognizes that there is a category of specialist tasks which is better carried out by the regular AVF. Certainly, contemporary experience in the Balkans would endorse this conclusion, for regular units carry over their expertise gained in such specialist fields as aid to the civil power. Reserve units usually lack such expertise.

Nevertheless, the availability of reserve forces as a second category of military capability, calls into question the ideal mix of regulars and reserve. It is tempting in certain circles to conclude that reserves can readily replace regulars. They are less expensive not only in direct costs such as pay, but also in the indirect support costs of regular forces. They encountered fewer problems in recruiting the required number of male and female personnel since reserve service is complementary to civilian employment, not an alternative. Other factors also encourage suitable recruits to come forward. In regard to national traditions of civil-military relations, as in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, reserve forces perpetuate the link between citizenship and military service. In the United Kingdom where such a link is not traditional, the local orientation of reserve forces carries on a tradition in which individuals enjoy the status and benefits of civic "in" groups. Accordingly for both politicians and service personnel, reserve forces are an attractive and valuable supplement to the regular AVF. What remains uncertain, however, is the ideal mix of these two components of the contemporary European all-volunteer force.<sup>35</sup>

Analyses of the AVF force structure have also emphasized the advantages of substituting civil servants for uniformed service personnel. A major conclusion in such studies is that the degree of substitution is primarily determined by defence manpower costs. Since these costs account for the major part of the defence expenditure of European military establishments, attention is drawn to the relative expense of employing civilian or uniformed personnel. It is not the intention in this study to debate the conclusion that regular armed forces personnel are comparatively expensive. "Ranks up to Major are paid 75-100% more than their Civil Service colleagues".<sup>36</sup>

Military personnel, in contrast, reject this conclusion that the armed forces are a well-paid privileged group. The figure frequently quoted by many officers is that they are at least 20% behind comparable civilian salaries. For reasonable parity with civilian jobs, taking into account "fringe" benefits and factors such as faster promotion, others talk about a shortfall of 70%. It is our contention, however, that the major issue of substitution is not relative rate of remuneration but the operational limitations which arise when regular AVF personnel are replaced with civilians of a comparable rank. The critical question is the availability of such personnel, uniformed or civilian, to meet "teeth" rather than "tail" needs. Uniformed personnel, irrespective of their immediate employment, tend to be multi-skilled, forming in many instances a ready reserve. Their civilian counterparts, in comparison, may not wish, or be able, to fill "teeth" roles. It would seem that to meet an ever expanding range of military tasks, the AVF will be obliged to continue relying on a conventional and traditional mode of recruitment.

### **Civil-military relations**

An outstanding characteristic of the post-modern military is the extent to which the way of life in the armed forces increasingly converges with practices in other organizations. Since the military is a large complex bureaucracy it is inevitable, as a number of classic studies have

noted, that many of its features replicate those of other bureaucracies. Indeed the military continues in many respects to be the ideal type representation of the exercise of rational-legal authority. In contemporary Europe, however, the degree of convergence between the armed forces and other organizations goes beyond this. Although the distinctive nature of national military cultures can still be readily identified, fundamental changes are taking place in an unprecedented manner in the traditional and essentially basic characteristics of the military.

Many of these changes result from political decisions. One critical aspect of this is linked to the **European Convention on Human Rights** or, more properly, to its incorporation into national law. We have noted previously some effects of this. Armed forces have been obliged to adopt and integrate into military law and administration regulations, the provisions of the Convention with regard to equal opportunities, sexual harassment at work and the recruitment of homosexuals. The extent to which service personnel now get the same legal rights as any other citizen regardless of their being subject to military discipline has now been extended (2000) in most European countries to give members of the armed forces the right to sue their commanding officers over the orders they had been given. Only eight countries (Spain, France, Portugal, Russia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and Liechtenstein) have asked for their armed forces to be exempt from this provision of the **Convention**.

In reviewing the implications of this major change to traditional military discipline, one British Member of Parliament has argued that this will destroy morale and undermine discipline.<sup>37</sup> The consequent effect of this, were it to be so, upon recruitment is uncertain, though it can be expected that any problem of low morale will have an impact upon rates of retention. It is the wider implications of the convergence of the military with other organizations, and the effect of this upon recruitment with which we are primarily concerned. The fundamental problem is that the degree of convergence is far from uniform, with the result that European armed forces consistently face considerable conflicts of interest.

In the context of recruitment, changes to the traditional military way of life continue to create a major sense of stress. Traditionally, military service was linked to the concept of public service. For the mass army, conscription as a means of recruitment was closely identified with the rights and obligations of citizenship. Successive West German **Ministry of Defence White Papers** made the point very clear. In the 1973-1974 White Paper, it was thus argued that through military service, conscripts developed "a sense of allegiance to our democratic state". The theme was also followed the following year when, in justifying its adherence to the principle of universal conscription, the Federal Government stressed that, 'Compulsory military service will continue to be a keystone of our defence effort. It is an essential civic duty'.<sup>38</sup> The normative ideology which sustained this principle was however also to be found in the United Kingdom notwithstanding the absence of conscription as a mode of recruitment. The thesis that military service functioned as an essential and necessary contribution towards political institutions was a consistent characteristic of the AVF.<sup>39</sup> For officers, their traditional commitment to the armed forces was closely linked with a wider social obligation to carry out a range of public duties. These obligations were, in turn, a general reflection of the **chevalier** image with its sense of guardianship and its emphasis on the traditional shared values of a social group and on a sense of personal obligation. For enlisted men, whilst their commitment to military service was more utilitarian in its origins, their primary motivation also included a sense of service. Most importantly, a normative-based ideology was developed through secondary socialization within the ship, regiment or airforce squadron.

For contemporary European all-volunteer forces, however, the continuing question is the extent to which changing patterns of civil-military relationships affect levels of recruitment and retention. One aspect of these relationships reflects the interplay of two distinctive sets of values and norms. The first is indicative of a military culture; the second identifies the preferences of a civilian society. Their interaction may take one of three forms:



- coincidental
- complementary
- contradictory

Each of these represents a degree of "resonance", that is, the extent to which the distinctive value-sets are in harmony with each other<sup>40</sup>. Where they are **coincidental**, then we can expect that the AVF will encounter few problems of recruitment and retention. For many reasons, a military career becomes attractive to the individual. The interpenetration of the civil and military elites for example, is a major incentive to achieve success. Service in the armed forces can confer upon participants a status which ensures access to a sought-after second career and to a wide range of economic and social benefits. There may be ready transition from a military to a civilian career and vice-versa, so that the resettlement problems which can determine individual attitudes towards remaining in the military, largely disappear. Both the levels of recruitment and retention reflect the individual advantages to be gained in pursuing a military career.

In direct contrast, we find that where the two sets of values are contradictory many recruitment and retention problems axiomatically follow. In this study, we are unable to examine in depth the reasons for this divergence of norms and values. We note that a variety of explanations have been put forward for what is, essentially, a lack of harmony. A major cause for this divergence can accordingly be attributed to the erosion over time of traditional national values and symbols. This is contrasted with the preference within the armed forces for the retention of established standards. Attention is also drawn to the radical changes which are taking place in the attitudes of a younger generation: the personal aims of the age cohort who are potential recruits to the armed forces accordingly differ markedly from the objectives and life-style of the military. For this group, there a number of reasons why a career in the AVF is thought to be increasingly less attractive- enhanced employment opportunities in the civil sector; a questioning of, and reluctance to accept, traditional authority; individual alienation and strong pacifist or anti-military sentiments. In consequence, the AVF, it is argued, will consistently encounter difficulties in achieving its desired levels of recruitment.

From experience gained in our previous research, we argue that, more usually, contemporary European civil-military relationships reflect a situation in which societal and military norms and values are essentially complementary. Armed forces are, indeed, the mirror of society. There is no evidence in Europe of that degree of fusion between civilian and military values which creates a militocracy. Equally, there is no evidence of a totally isolated AVF. Rather, we find positive indications of the acceptance of armed forces within society. Nevertheless, variations in that level of acceptance materially determine levels of recruitment and retention. As we have noted above, many contemporary military operations in implementing a constabulary role confer upon armed forces an enhanced status and level of acceptance. Conversely, unpopular or politically suspect operations lessen public acceptance of the legitimacy of the military. Underlying such variations, however, is the persistent issue of the extent to which the culture of contemporary armed forces is consonant with that of the parent society. We noted, previously, that Segal and his colleagues in reviewing cultural and military opinion in the United States, concluded that a critical variable was the absence or presence of a broader cultural divide between American armed forces and the civilian society. In evaluating this variable with respect to European armed forces, however, a number of factors have to be borne in mind. Firstly, the identification of such a divide does not contradict the more general assertion that military norms and values are essentially complementary to those of the parent society. It may well be that attitudes diverge with regard to certain issues, but this difference of opinion does not necessarily create a "military caste". Secondly, the expected emergence of specific attitudes derived from the peculiarities of military life "should be seen as no more problematic than would be similar attitudes in any legitimate occupational community".<sup>41</sup>

It is, however, when we look to the future of civil-military relationships in Western Europe that we find indications of major changes in established patterns. The basis of these relationships in the past has been the emphasis placed on the rights and obligations of citizenship. In the post-feudal society, a hall-mark of citizenship was the right to bear arms; a corresponding obligation was the duty to serve in the nation's armed forces. This was a characteristic of the mass army. It was also the more general basis of the status of the citizen-soldier. Outstanding examples of the latter can still be identified outside Europe. Israel and Singapore come readily to mind as countries in which citizenship continues to be linked to the rights and obligations of individuals in the form of military service. Singapore, in particular, is a classic case study which merits further analysis.<sup>42</sup> In Western Europe, however, only Switzerland can be truly identified with this concept and, in general, there is an increased questioning of the link between citizenship and military service. At first, it would seem that this represents calculations of self-interest but, on further analysis, it would appear that we are witnessing a more general evaluation of citizenship. The issue of military service is but a part of a more general critical analysis of the relationship of the individual to the state. Accordingly, we can note a trend for individuals to be increasingly concerned with the fairness and impartiality of governments. Where the reached conclusion is that individuals are disadvantaged as citizens in certain critical areas, then a reluctance to acknowledge any civic duties – including service in the armed forces – is an expression of distrust.<sup>43</sup>

The long-term effect of this upon levels of recruitment has yet to be seen. Previously, a European preference for the adoption of compulsory military service over an all-volunteer and professional force structure contributed to the military's acting as an instrument of nation building. Armed forces accordingly served as a bonding institution in which the duty of military service encouraged the genesis of shared values and norms. In the post-modern military, however, the shift away from compulsive is matched by the growth of individualism. The choices open to the individual are now greatly increased and there is no certainty that such a choice will be exercised in favour of serving in the all-volunteer force.

## **TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

### **The ASPIC factor**

Recruitment to, and retention, in the European all-volunteer forces will, in the future, be very much affected by the ASPIC factor:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| A | : | Alteration of goals and missions.               |
| S | : | Substitution between personnel.                 |
| P | : | Privatization and civilianization of functions. |
| I | : | Internationalization.                           |
| C | : | Changes to conditions of service.               |

The alteration of goals and missions which is a logical follow-on from the ending of the Cold War, is most marked in the proposals to create a European Rapid Reaction Force. Whether this is, or is not, to be equated with the creation of a European Army which is the military arm of the European Union is a political question. Its identified missions, however, are clearer. Designed to total some 60,000 personnel by 2003, this Force is expected to be ready for action within sixty days, for deployment within a 2,500 mile radius and to be able to operate on detachment for up to a year. Such action is identified with three primary roles:

- humanitarian rescue missions



- troop deployment to avert a crisis
- direct intervention to halt hostilities

What is uncertain is the impact of this major change of mission on the attainment of recruiting and retention target. The associated discussion is highly politicised. It ranges from the argument that these 'watered-down' military tasks are unattractive to the potential recruit or to the soldier who is considering re-enlistment, to the suggestion that these are, in the eyes of the public, tasks of a high status. This implies that individuals will be disposed to consider a military career because of the associated public prestige.

A number of American studies have examined the effects of serving on these "new" missions on the propensity to re-enlist in the military. Reed and Segal surveyed 512 US troops who had been deployed on Operation Hurricane Andrew (Florida), Operation Restore Hope (Somalia) and Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti). They found that a plurality of soldiers were planning a civilian career (approximately 36%). It was significant, however, that the relationship between intentions to re-enlist and the number of deployments was not significant.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, respondents felt that the mission was appropriate for military police. It was also suggested that reservists could perform peacekeeping operations as well as regular military personnel, a conclusion separately reached by Segal et al.<sup>45</sup>

The conclusions reached by Moskos in a later study in the form of field research on *Task Force Falcon* in FYROM and Kosovo, are also encouraging for recruitment and retention. He notes the satisfactory level of morale, especially amongst those in combat and combat support roles as opposed to combat service posts. More particularly, he notes that soldiers in peacekeeping operations such as *Task Force Falcon* "have a higher re-enlistment rate of soldiers than those in home-based units". This he accepts, however, may be affected by the screening out process prior to deployment and to the payment of tax-free re-enlistment bonuses.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast with these findings, European commentaries consistently stress the extent to which over-stretch, turbulence, separation, excessive overseas deployment and role uncertainty, deter recruitment and retention, especially the latter. Significantly, for the United States military, the Department of the Army recently enacted a stabilization policy to limit the number of subsequent deployments of individual soldiers.

The *substitution of personnel* is usually identified by the economist with the replacement of people by sophisticated and technologically advanced equipment. It is, however, increasingly apparent that many of the "new" missions continue today, as they did in the colonial and gendarmerie forces of the past, to be labour intensive. The requirement is for the deployment of small fire-teams rather than heavy battle tanks or S.P. guns. Accordingly, "substitution" can be logically identified with changes to established manning policies. The appropriate mix of reserve and regular forces, for example, is an opportunity for the substitution of regular forces by reserves. We note in Europe, an increasing tendency for major substitution in respect of such occupational specialisms as medical and intelligence personnel, together with a more general increase in the use of reservists in the combat arms.

An alternative interpretation of "substitution" which is less traditional, is the greater use of women in those specialisms from which, hitherto, they have been excluded. Women have been recruited to *combat service* posts from the First World War onwards and to *combat support* posts from the Second World War. Now, women are increasingly recruited to *combat* posts. The concept of "women in combat" is most readily identified with their deployment at sea or their acceptance as aircrew. Noticeably, such combat is carried out at a distance; a generally reached conclusion is that women and men perform equally satisfactorily in these roles. We now note, however, that women could substitute for men in

*direct combat on the ground posts.* The latter are those positions where military personnel engage the enemy with individual or crew weapons while being exposed to hostile fire and with a high probability of physical contact with the hostile forces personnel. Policies within Western armed forces in regard to their recruitment currently differ considerably. At one extreme, we find that Sweden actively recruits women to these *direct combat on the ground posts*. Denmark and Belgium have no legal restriction on their recruitment. For both countries, the number of women involved is small but significant. Denmark has 5.5% women (979) and Belgium 7.4% (3,147). In France, where women total 8.5% of the military and the Netherlands where they represent 7.6% (4,049), both countries follow a common pattern of excluding women from some combat areas, including marine commandos and minor ships. In France, in addition, women are not allowed to join the Foreign Legion.

In the United Kingdom women comprise 8% (16,606) of the total force. During the Second World War, women served in both combat service and combat support roles. From 1989 onwards, a selection of combat posts were progressively opened to them. After 1 September 1990, all newly recruited women to the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) were liable to serve in sea-going billets. Three years later 700 women were at sea in surface ships, a small but significant percentage (c.15%) of all naval personnel. The Royal Air Force announced plans in July 1989 to recruit women pilots and navigators. By 1995 eight women had qualified to fly jet aircraft while 96% of all posts were open to women. The situation in the Army, however, is more complex. After 1991, 100 from 134 trade groups were open to women (75%) who, in common with other women in the middle range of the continuum of exclusion, can serve, with some exceptions, in most arms and corps. They cannot, however, be employed in direct combat on the ground posts in the Royal Armoured Corps or the Infantry, including the Royal Air Force Regiment, though they can serve in administrative and technical posts. Significantly, women are not recruited to the elite units of specialist forces, that is, the Royal Marines Commandos or the Parachute Regiment. Significantly, however, following a decision by the Defence Secretary (Geoff Hoon), a major review of the possibility of substituting women for men in direct combat on the ground posts is being undertaken. At a time when the infantry are said to be 1,600 men under authorised strength (the equivalent of three battalions), the Defence Secretary has said that women should be excluded from serving in infantry units, only if it could be demonstrated that operational effectiveness would be undermined.<sup>47</sup>

*The Privatization and Civilianization* of military posts has, to the economist, much to commend it. Irrespective of the possible direct cost advantages of replacing military personnel by civil servants or civilian contractors, it is nevertheless possible, to offer an alternative assessment of such a move. A characteristic feature of armed forces as a *crisis organization* has always been the manner in which a core force of active duty personnel has been complemented by a secondary force of regular personnel. The latter act as a "ready reserve", drawn from a mix of personnel in "rest slots", combat service and combat support posts and others. Replacing this secondary force by civil servants or civilian contractors, will reduce the combat effectiveness of the primary force. Most importantly, the loss of "rest slots" increases the degree of turbulence and separation endured by personnel in the active duty component of the military.

An over-strict adherence to the economist's preference for manning efficiency and effectiveness often overlooks the extent to which an optimum level of manning in a **crisis organization** is determined not only by the nature of the task, but also by the continuing need for skills updating. Within the armed forces in Western Europe, sophisticated and comprehensive programmes of continuing education and training ensure that personnel are prepared to meet present and future task requirements. To ensure that personnel are available for such education and training, manpower planning has traditionally ensured a degree of spare capacity in manning levels to facilitate this. One objective of privatization and civilianization of posts in the military, however, is the elimination of what is defined as

“overmanning”. Whilst this will normally result in cost savings, the effect on education and training programmes is less readily visible. The latter nevertheless are important, not as ends in themselves but as a means to an end. The objective is the attainment of expertise is most readily exemplified in the interoperability of personnel: this removes the distinction between combat, combat support and combat service roles. Privatization and civilianization, however, preclude this.

To date, *internationalization* has had little, if any, effect on the levels of recruitment and retention in Western European armed forces. As we have suggested, however, the formation of a *European Rapid Reaction Force* may change this. There is considerable experience to date of armed forces working in collaboration within the NATO context but the proposed changes have a wider effect. In terms of recruitment and retention, the critical question is the effect of such internationalization on the culture of national armed forces. Such a culture, particularly with regard to the sub-culture of enlisted personnel, encourages the identification of the individual with a narrowly defined group. This is most noticeable where an armed force is structured around the regiment, the ship or the squadron. An individual identifies not with the military as a whole but with the primary group. What is uncertain is whether a shift of emphasis away from the traditional status of such a sub-unit to the larger internationalized force, will deter recruits and affect rates of retention.

This *internalization* can be seen as ‘the expression of a logic of action that emphasizes budget cuts and hence favours economies of scale and scope’<sup>48</sup>. This stress on the economic dimension of the process, however, has to be complemented by a greater awareness of the social implications of such internalization. What continues to be an area of uncertainty, is the effect upon recruitment and retention of differing military policies in key areas of human resource management. There are major national differences in this context with regard to the integration of women into the military, particularly into combat posts, to the treatment of ethnic minorities and to the tolerance afforded homosexuals. When national troops are part of a multinational military organization, enforced cultural integration in these areas can affect the attitudes of individuals towards the military career. The ongoing tension between traditional military values and contemporary social values is symptomatic of a more general cultural differentiation within internationalized military organizations.

Faced with difficulties in meeting recruiting and retention targets, it is open to Western armed forces to consider *changes to established conditions of service*. Conventionally, the military has recruited from a narrow age band, whilst imposing relatively young upper age limits. This has confirmed the image of the ideal-type soldier as a young and fit individual, age criteria being complemented by the enforcement of rigid medical, psychological and educational standards. These together with an expressed preference for the recruitment of personnel who will be bound by a higher moral standard<sup>49</sup>, imposes artificial limits on the size of the potential pool of suitable personnel, both at the point of recruitment and subsequently.

Now, armed forces in Western Europe have to take into account, increasingly, the changing employment attitudes of young people. Where the latter prefer a variety of job experiences rather than a career, employment in the military is seen as an ordinary occupation – “just another job”. This shift from the *institutional* orientation traditionally associated with the military career to an *occupational* orientation seems to be irreversible. There are, however, two important countervailing trends. Firstly, an important feature of the *occupational* orientation is the focus on specialist qualifications and skill level, both of which are valuable in the civilian labour market. With the decline in the number of apprenticeships in civilian firms, armed forces have the opportunity to reintroduce and augment their own apprenticeship schemes. In the past, these were the source of many technically qualified enlisted personnel as well as non-commissioned and commissioned officers. Such schemes are criticised by those who disparage “child soldiers”, but past experience illustrates the benefits to the military, and the parent society, of such training and educational programmes.

Secondly, it is to be noted that at the current upper age limit of retention, a substantial number of highly qualified and experienced personnel are lost to the European military. The fixing of an upper age limit is arbitrary and is more usually related to career planning or external pressure than to the individuals ability to carry out the task. Moreover, the latter consistently changes in response to alterations to the aims and objectives of contemporary armed forces in the post-Cold War period. A greater degree of flexibility which could accommodate such features as short term contracts, extension of service, re-employment as civilian substitution personnel and re-engagement, would be advantageous. As economists have stressed, the military could benefit from examining more critically the policies adopted by other organizations to ensure the retention of highly skilled and experienced staff.

More radical changes to established conditions of service start from the premise that no alternative should be excluded from consideration. We note, however, that manpower policy is generally subject to major political constraints so that, in reality, little can change. Seemingly logical moves – the enlargement of the French Foreign Legion; the greater recruitment of former Warsaw Pact personnel; the expansion of the Gurkha contingent in the British Army – generate substantial issues. At base, we are left with a situation in which minor changes may be acceptable, but major change is to be avoided.

The ASPIC factor merits further research to take into account the increasing problems of recruitment and retention faced by the contemporary Western European military as it shifts from the mass army based on the draft to the All-Volunteer Force. Some of the difficulties which it identifies are peculiar to this military; others are more generally representative of trends in the AVF in the post Cold War military. Their economic and social dimensions, however, are, in all cases, of paramount importance.

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## **THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION**



## **THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE: AN ECONOMICS PERSPECTIVE**

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## Introduction: the issues<sup>1</sup>

Debates about the all-volunteer force (AVF) often focus on its limitations reflected in problems of recruitment, retention and personnel costs. Some critics advocate a return to conscription which they claim will 'solve' these problems by providing an 'adequate' quantity of recruits which would be cheaper than a voluntary system. Compared with regular personnel, critics make the point that conscripts are relatively cheap, they need little support since they are not accompanied by families and they have little leave so that they are always available for service (Bandow, 1999; Donnelly, 2000). Critics also point to the sustainability requirements of modern armies on operations (eg. peace-keeping): a modern army requires five or six people for every one soldier in the field (Donnelly, 2000, p30).

Military personnel are a major resource and budgetary cost for the armed forces. The recruitment, training, retention and efficient utilisation of military personnel raises a set of human resources issues where economists and especially defence economists can apply their theories, empirical techniques and critical evaluations of alternative policy options.

The paper starts with a review of the defence economics literature on military personnel and the AVF. Next, the economic issues are outlined, including the 'defence economics problem', the need for difficult choices and the range of choices affecting military personnel. A case study of the UK is presented. The paper concludes by outlining some future policy options.

## Literature Review

Much of the economics literature on military personnel has been dominated by US economists (eg. Becker, Fisher, Oi). The literature has analysed the draft versus an AVF, human capital (training and skill transferability), recruitment, retention, pay, the human capital losses of war and the benefits of military service (Hartley and Hooper, 1990). In reviewing this literature, it is useful to distinguish between two periods, namely, 1960 to 1989 and the 1990s, reflecting the Cold War and the post-Cold War, respectively.

### *The early literature: 1960 to 1989.*

In the late 1960s, the choice between a draft and an AVF was a major policy issue in the USA. An AVF was adopted in the USA in 1973 whilst in the UK conscription had been abolished in 1960. For the UK, it was the increasing cost, complexity and skilled labour requirements of modern, high technology weapons which partly contributed to the end of conscription (its abolition was also a vote-attractive measure). Conscription was proving a relatively costly method of training military personnel. It was claimed that the more efficient solution required highly-skilled, experienced and consequently long-service regulars able to maintain modern weapons and use them effectively, so providing the armed forces with a worthwhile return on their substantial and rising training costs (Cmnd 9691, 1956). For example, in the 1980s, it took the RAF three years to train a fast jet pilot at a cost of £3 million (1987 prices) and a minimum of six years productive service was needed to justify such training costs; by 1998, the training period was 5.5 years at a cost of £5.8 million (1998 prices: HCP 495, 1988, p56; HCP 880, 2000).

Unlike the UK, economists in the USA contributed to the relative merits of the draft versus an AVF. Analysis of the draft involved the application of standard micro-economic theory comparing market price

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<sup>1</sup>This paper benefited from comments at a seminar held in Beverley in October 2000.

systems with the draft system (cf. capitalist and central planning systems). Abolition of the draft changed the relative costs of military personnel, making personnel relatively more expensive. Economic theory predicts that as a result there will be incentives to substitute relatively cheaper for more expensive inputs. An AVF will make military personnel more expensive, so leading to substitutions between equipment (capital or weapons) and labour, as well as between military personnel and cheaper labour inputs, such as civilians and less skilled labour. If defence 'output' remains unchanged, defence spending will increase. Other results of an AVF include lower labour turnover costs (eg. training costs): improved motivation resulting in higher productivity; the end of draft-induced uncertainty which distorted the patterns of investments in human capital and family planning; and the end of efforts to avoid or defer the draft. The final outcome of an AVF will be an improved allocation of resources, with the pay of military personnel reflecting relative scarcities (their alternative-use value or opportunity costs). Also, the draft is criticised as a form of involuntary servitude which imposes 'in-kind' taxes on the young adult section of the population (distributional effects: Hartley and Hooper, 1990; Oi, 1967; Hartley and Sandler, 2001).

Empirical work has estimated supply functions for military personnel, mostly for the USA. Such models usually include a relative pay variable reflecting military and civil pay as well as other variables such as civilian unemployment, wars and advertising campaigns (Ash, *et al.*, 1983; Withers, 1977). Typical relative pay elasticities ranged between 0.5 and 1.0 and unemployment elasticities varied between 0.5 and 1.4 (Warner and Asch, 1995, p 367). Retention is an alternative to recruitment and a study has been made of the cost-effectiveness of re-enlistment in the US Navy. Analysis shows that where experienced and inexperienced men are substitutes, raising the re-enlistment rate can be cost-increasing (inefficient: Fisher and Morton, 1967; see also Warner and Asch, 1995).

A number of US studies have measured the economic benefits of military service (there are also costs in injuries and deaths). Benefits include training and the transferability of the resulting human capital to the civilian economy and the civilian earnings profiles of former military personnel. A US study of nine military occupations found that for transferable skills (eg. electrical/mechanical/electronics equipment repair), military experience was a close substitute for civilian experience. For specialised or specific military skills (eg. combat skills), military experience increases civilian earnings, but not at the same rate as civilian experience (Goldberg and Warner, 1987; Hartley and Hooper, 1990).

#### *The recent literature: the 1990s*

The new world order following the end of the Cold War has generated a new strategic environment. Armed forces have experienced 'downsizing' leading to 'smaller but better equipped forces' designed for new roles ranging from war-fighting to peace-keeping, crisis management, humanitarian aid and disaster relief. New missions demand new skills and new force structures, but together with smaller forces the result is 'overstretch' reflected in higher quits and difficulties of recruiting. Technical progress and continued downward pressure on defence budgets is forcing armed forces to re-think some of their traditional methods of 'doing business,' so generating a new research agenda for defence manpower economics (Warner and Asch, 2000). Nonetheless, the established theoretical and empirical literature remains relevant. Significantly, the recent literature is dominated by US economists and addresses policy-relevant issues following the end of the Cold War.

Downsizing at the end of the Cold War led more nations to abolish conscription and adopt an AVF. Whilst the US 1960s literature on the draft versus an AVF remains relevant, the analysis has moved to a modified position, namely, "...that the volunteer force is not unambiguously superior to a draft.... The issue is ultimately empirical and hinges on questions about the elasticity of supply, the extent of the external threat, and the productivity differences between volunteer and conscripted forces" (Warner and Asch, 1995, p379). Subsequently, these qualifications were clarified in three propositions. First, "...because volunteer forces are (usually) more productive than draft forces of equal size, conscription

need not be the more efficient procurement method even if the draft force costs less." Second, "...the case for conscription has probably weakened over time due to improvements to military technology, which have served to increase the relative productivity of volunteer forces...." Third, "...the case for conscription strengthens when the demand for defense is high, as in times of extreme, pervasive threats to national security" (Warner and Asch, 1996, p311).

Further recent studies of the draft have focused on its relationship with the degree of unionisation in an economy and on the magnitude of its budgetary savings. A public choice analysis found a positive relationship between the degree of unionisation and the presence of the military draft, so supporting the hypothesis that unions benefit from the draft: the draft protects union members from low-skilled younger competitors (Anderson, *et al*, 1996). Estimates have also been made of the budgetary savings from conscription as part of the debate about burden-sharing in NATO. The results show that the value of conscription as a percentage of national military expenditures averaged 9.2% in 1974 and 5.7% in 1987 (Oneal, 1992).

Other contributions in the 1990s have dealt with pay and recruitment. Melese, *et al* (1992) develop a framework for analysing pay and benefits (eg. housing, medical support) as components of military compensation. They show that the wage-benefit mix can have significant and predictable impacts on hiring, retention, labour costs and the characteristics of individuals who constitute the armed forces. Solnick, *et al* (1991) use quit rates to estimate compensating wage differentials in the US military. They estimate that the US Navy would have to pay wage premiums ranging from 4% to 24% to achieve the same re-enlistment as the USAF for single white males.

Downsizing in the US military in the early 1990s was the basis for a number of labour supply and recruitment studies. Berner and Daula (1993) present new insights into labour supply to the US Army and the links between institutional incentives and the effectiveness of resources used for recruitment. They find that labour supply to the US Army was positively, but inelastically, related to relative pay and unemployment and that marginal recruits seem to be very sensitive to monetary incentives (eg. enlistment bonuses). Knox Lovell, *et al* (1991) use econometric techniques to estimate cost-efficient military recruiting. Their model was designed to provide guidance to military recruitment agencies responding to pressures to cut back and improve their efficiency. Buddin (1993) considers the problem of maintaining the US reserve forces in an era of military drawdown which will reduce the pool of trained, experienced personnel available to the reserves.

### **The Contribution of Economics**

Military personnel issues need to be addressed in the context of the *defence economics problem*. This problem arises from the twin pressures of constant or falling defence budgets and rising equipment costs.

Typically, unit equipment have risen at rates of some 10% per annum in real terms (ie. defence equipment costs have risen faster than general inflation). This means that as forces modernise, if they retain the same size of force structure, the cost of equipment procurement as a share of the defence budget will double in real terms every 18 years (Donnelly, 2000, p30). Without corresponding increases in defence budgets, the long-term result is a reduction in the size of forces (eg. claims of a one ship navy, one tank army and Starship Enterprise air force: Kirkpatrick, 1995). As a result, defence policy-makers have to make difficult choices; and these choices have to be made in a world of uncertainty where the future is unknown and unknowable. Defence planners have to make decisions today about equipment and force structures which will have to respond to threats some 20-50 years in the future.

### *Defence choices and economic principles: the military production function*

The military production function shows the various combinations of military inputs required to produce military outputs. Inputs comprise technology, equipment, bases, facilities, land and military and civilian personnel. Military output is more difficult to measure, but it ranges from 'top level' indicators such as peace, security and protection to 'lower level' indicators of effectiveness, such as numbers of targets destroyed or reductions in truck loads of supplies (Hildebrandt, 1999). The 'top level' indicators can also be converted into more meaningful indicators expressed in terms of capabilities (eg. the ability to fight two regional conflicts in any part of the world for an indefinite period).

The military production function suggests four key economic principles for addressing defence choices, including personnel choices:

*Principle I: Focus on final outputs and not inputs.* Inputs contribute to final outputs in such forms as protection, security and military effectiveness. This means that the relevant defence choices concern the contribution of the various inputs of air, land and sea forces to final outputs and the implications for outputs of small changes in the size of each of these forces (eg. a smaller or larger air force). This economic principle shifts the emphasis in defence choices from an obsession with inputs (eg. numbers of tanks, warships, combat aircraft, etc) to assessing their contribution to defence outputs.

*Principle II: Substitution.* There are alternative methods of achieving military outputs. Examples include the possibilities of substitution between equipment and personnel (capital and labour), between quality and quantity of equipment and forces, between manned aircraft and missiles (SAMS and cruise missiles) and between regular and reserve forces. Economic theory assumes that cost-conscious firms and organisations will seek to replace more expensive inputs with cheaper inputs.

*Principle III: Efficiency incentives.* Incentives are needed to achieve efficiency. Without a system of incentives, rewards and punishments, individuals and organisations will consume 'on-the-job' leisure reflected in 'organisational slack' and inefficiency. In the private sector, incentives are provided by the profit motive, by competition from rival firms and by the capital market with its threat of bankruptcy and take-over. Such incentives are lacking in the armed forces and elsewhere in the public sector.

*Principle IV: Public choice and the military-political-industrial complex.* Economists have developed models of defence ministries and armed forces as budget-maximising bureaucracies; governments and politicians as vote-maximisers; and defence contractors as rent-seeking producer interest groups (Sandler and Hartley, 1999, pp124-128). These models show that defence policy is unlikely to resemble the efficient outcomes of standard economic theory (ie. as reflected in *Principles I-III*). Instead, bureaucracies seeking to defend their budgets are likely to exaggerate the demand for defence and underestimate its costs (eg. new threats; cost escalation on new equipment programmes); politicians will seek to protect the military bases and defence plants in their constituencies; and in lobbying for new projects, contractors will under-estimate their costs and exaggerate the performance potential. The interest groups in the military-political-industrial complex also form major barriers to changes which are likely to make them worse-off.

### **The Economics of Military Personnel**

Military personnel provide the labour and human capital inputs into the military production function. Acquiring personnel is a procurement problem embracing choices about what to buy (quantity and quality: numbers and skills), where to buy from (ie. nationals or others) and how to buy (ie. choice of employment contract: cf. equipment procurement). Typically, the armed forces are major buyers of



labour, but in a voluntary system, their buying power is affected by the competing demands of private and public sector employers.

To attract labour, civilian employers offer a variety of pay and non-pay inducements reflected in employment contracts which give employers limited legal rights over their labour force. For example, in the civilian sector, employers are subject to laws relating to hours of work, trade union representation, health and safety and periods of notice for quits and dismissal; outside the workplace, individuals are free to pursue their personal interests (eg. personal relationships; location of residence, etc). In contrast, the military employment contract for both draft and volunteer forces has some distinctive features resembling contracts of slavery: individuals serve (draft) or 'sign-up' (AVF) for a specified period which has to be completed, during which they are subject to military laws and discipline; they cannot strike for higher pay during their contract; they can be ordered to serve at a variety of locations, sometimes with little notice and without family support; and their duties can result in injuries and death. To attract personnel for an AVF requires that the disadvantages of military employment be compensated through pay and non-pay benefits (eg. clothing; housing; medical support; education for dependents; training which is transferable to the civilian economy; leisure; sports and recreation facilities; and overseas travel). Pay elements might also comprise pay during service and lump sum and pension entitlements at the end of service where the length of service is less than the working life, so allowing further employment in the civilian sector before retirement.

#### *Military personnel choices*

Within the military production function, the procurement choices for military personnel involve choices on numbers and quality (skills), on pay and non-pay benefits and between an AVF and conscription. These choices have implications for recruitment, training and retention. Further personnel choices are required between regular and reserve forces, men and women, military and civilian personnel, and between military personnel and equipment (labour versus capital). Other possibilities include choices between skilled and unskilled personnel, training for specialised military tasks only or training to provide skills which are transferable to the civilian economy, short-term versus long-term employment contracts, recruitment and retention and high or low standards of entry (medical and educational requirements).

Financial pressures on defence budgets will compel the armed forces to think more radically about their personnel requirements and the efficiency with which military labour is utilised. Comparisons with the private sector show the opportunities for new solutions for military personnel. Private sector firms are continuously subject to changes reflecting new consumer demands, new rivals and new technology. Firms have to respond and adapt to change if they are to survive, where adjustment might involve new forms of industrial organisation, entering new markets (at home and overseas), mergers and take-overs, adopting new equipment and new business practices (eg. lean manufacturing; partnering; JIT inventory) and changing senior managers. For example, firms are always re-considering their 'mix' of work undertaken 'in-house' and 'bought-in' from outside suppliers and they will seek profitable opportunities for mergers, either at same stage of production (horizontal) or at different stages of production within an industry (vertical), or in other industries (conglomerate mergers). Unless a market is protected by the state, it is always vulnerable to rivalry and competition will create new ways of 'doing business.' Incentives for change are provided by the profit motive, with entrepreneurs in a world of uncertainty seeking to discover profitable opportunities before their rivals.

Consider the implications of this private sector model for the armed forces and military personnel. Military bases and units (eg. regiments; ships) can be analysed as firms with military commanders as entrepreneurs and managers, combining their forces of equipment and personnel to achieve a defence output (eg. air defence of a region; anti-submarine protection). The private sector model has at least four implications for military force structures and personnel. First, the various sectors of the armed forces

should be open to competition, so subjecting their traditional monopoly property rights to rivalry (eg. the army with land-based SAMS would be allowed to compete with the air force and its manned combat aircraft for air defence capability). Second, unit commanders would be able to select their preferred mix of work undertaken 'in-house' and 'bought-in' (eg. civilian contractors). Third, unit commanders would be allowed to determine the 'ideal' size of their units, including the possibility of mergers and take-overs. In the army, for example, this approach would raise fundamental questions about whether the traditional regiment is the best form of organisation, its ideal size and whether it would be more cost-effective to merge with other similar units (eg. mergers between infantry units to form larger units: horizontal mergers) or with other army units (eg. infantry with artillery, tank and transport units: vertical mergers), or with units in other services (eg. infantry unit merging with air force strike and transport squadrons: conglomerate mergers). Fourth, military commanders and their personnel need incentives to behave efficiently and seek lower-cost solutions. Profits provide the incentive mechanism in the private sector: the equivalent for military commanders would be fixed budgets with monetary rewards for economising (eg. military units might become labour-managed firms). But, unlike the private sector, the armed forces operate as a set of non-competing organisations (indeed, the existence of three services encourages collusion and the allocation of budgets on the 'buggins turn' principle).

Inevitably, application of the private sector model to the armed forces has its limitations and its critics. Predictably, there would be opposition to using mercenaries as an extreme privatisation solution. The private sector solution would also resemble a market solution (the 'chaos' of markets) which would be radically different from the traditional ordered central planning and allocation system typical of the armed forces (here, it is interesting to observe that a central planning system is used to defend capitalism and there is often a reluctance to apply the lessons of successful capitalism to the armed forces). Armed forces are also different in that there are no market prices for their outputs, so that there is no indication of society's valuation of defence outputs. Here, one solution would be the introduction of performance indicators for military commanders with budgets related to target indicators. However, the experience with performance indicators has shown the need for care, since they can produce unexpected and undesirable results (eg. in health care, the operation was a success, but the patient died).

Market solutions require major changes and established interest groups in the armed forces will resist changes which are likely to make them worse-off (eg. reflected in such arguments as the military are 'different' and national defence cannot be based on the profit-motive and 'vulgar' notions of cost-benefit analysis). Also, private sector employment contracts differ in their duration: both parties can terminate the contract with relatively short periods of notice. Military employment contracts are of longer duration and this creates a challenge for the military, since long-term and guaranteed employment makes it more difficult to ensure that employees are continuously providing efficient effort levels. On the other hand, long-term guaranteed employment ensures that the military can obtain a return on its costly training investments, it allows the accumulation of valuable experience and ultimately, might be the optimal solution to providing an *efficient war fighting force which might appear to be inefficient in peace-time*. Nonetheless, questions about efficiency remain relevant, since defence is a major user of scarce resources which have alternative uses. The fact that a nation's armed forces are successful in war does not prove that they are efficient: it might reflect the nation's willingness to devote massive resources 'in pursuit of victory' (eg. Soviet Union and Western allies in World War II).

Despite its limitations, the private sector model has some obvious applications to the military and military personnel. Contractorisation and competitive tendering allow private firms to bid for work traditionally undertaken 'in-house' by the armed forces, so subjecting 'in-house' monopolies to rivalry. Examples include repair, maintenance, training, management of stores and facilities, transport and air traffic control. Competition has led to privatisation with private contractors supplying services and in some cases, the armed forces have leased rather than purchased equipment for ownership (eg. flight simulators: air transport). For the armed forces, competitive tendering and privatisation offers cost-

savings, but at a possible cost in the form of reduced operational capability in crisis and war. Contractorisation also changes the requirements for military personnel with civilians replacing military staff and with new requirements for military staff to organise and monitor contracts with private firms. As a result, questions arise as to the limits of contractorisation: for economists, such limits occur when the costs of further contractorisation exceed its benefits. In this context, international comparisons of the extent of contractorisation would be informative to policy-makers.

Other possible applications of the private sector model include employment contracts, promotion and retirement. Military employment contracts might be modified to include an element of payment-by-result, relating pay to efficiency improvements and more short-term contracts might be introduced (reflecting the changing employment attitudes of young people preferring a variety of job experiences rather than a job for life). The military might also re-consider its policy of promotion wholly from within, based on points of entry at a young age (eg. a future admiral will be appointed from the intake of young naval officers). Private firms are often willing to recruit top managers and other staff from outside their organisation rather than relying wholly on internal promotion (to some extent, contractorisation fulfills this function). Finally, the military might consider 'running-on' its highly-trained and experienced personnel rather than retiring them early (eg. at the age of 55 compared with 65 in the civilian sector). The 'running-on' option is regularly used for equipment and a similar policy could be applied to military human capital. Clearly, all these options and others need to be subject to economic evaluation and might be explored initially through pilot experiments.

## **The UK Experience**

### *The stylised facts*

Since the creation of an AVF by 1963, numbers have shown a long-term decline, falling from 418,000 UK Service personnel in 1963 to almost 208,000 by 2000. Armed forces per 1,000 people have also declined from 5.9 per 1,000 people in 1985 to 3.7 per 1,000 people in 1997 (Harries-Jenkins, 2000). Between 1963 and 2000, the size of the AVF has been determined by Conservative and Labour Governments, various defence reviews, wars in the Falklands, the Gulf, Bosnia and Kosovo, new technology and by the end of the Cold War in 1990. Table 1 shows that numbers were declining before the end of the Cold War, but substantial reductions occurred in the 1990s (part of the peace dividend). Evidence on the percentage cuts in personnel in the 1990s indicates the willingness of each service to sacrifice personnel (or its inability to protect its force structure). On this basis, the percentage cuts in personnel between 1990 and 2000 were greatest for UK Service personnel located overseas (51%), followed by the RAF (40%), the Navy (32%), UK civilians (29%) and the Army (28%: the average cut for all UK Service personnel was 32%). The substantial difference in the percentage cuts in personnel between the RAF and the Army might reflect the capital-intensity of air forces and the labour-intensity of armies. Similarly, the higher percentage cuts for the Volunteer Reserve (44%: mostly army) compared with the regular Army (28%) reflects either the ability of the regular Army to 'protect' itself in an era of budget cuts or the belief that the Volunteer Reserve is less cost-effective in the new strategic environment (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Numbers of UK Military & Civilian Personnel**

Year	UK Service Personnel Numbers (000s)				UK Civilians Employed by MoD (000s)	Total UK MoD Manpower (000s)	UK Reserve Forces (000s)	
	Army	RAF	RN	Total			Regular Reserve	Volunteer Reserve
1975	167.1	95.0	76.2	338.4	266.6	605.0	168.0	70.6
1980	159.1	89.7	71.9	320.6	239.8	560.4	192.3	77.1
1985	162.4	93.4	70.4	326.2	174.1	500.3	205.7	88.6
1990	152.8	89.7	63.2	305.7	141.4	447.1	250.8	90.6
1995	111.7	70.8	50.9	233.3	116.1	349.4	264.1	64.9
2000	110.1	54.7	42.8	207.6	100.3	307.9	241.3	50.7

**Note:**

- i. Figures are for UK Service and civilian personnel, excluding locally entered/engaged Service and civilian personnel. UK Regular Forces are trained and untrained.
- ii. Reserve figures for 1975 based on 1976.

**Source:** MoD (2000).

Over the period 1980 to 2000, the share of personnel in the UK defence budget declined from 41% to 38%, but in real terms, the total wage bill for the armed forces rose slightly whilst the numbers of UK Service personnel declined substantially (by 35% over 20 years: see Table 2). As a result, real labour costs per UK Service person rose by 60% from 1980 to 2000 and, assuming wages reflect labour productivity, this confirms a substantial productivity improvement (although it is recognised that defence expenditure is not a measure of defence output: Table 3). Over the same period, the civilian wage bill in real terms declined by over 40% whilst the numbers of civilians fell by almost 60%. Pensions were also a significant cost, rising from 11% of total armed forces total personnel costs in 1980/81 to 16% in 1990/91 (the pension statistics changed in 1993/94: Table 2).

Table 2. UK Military Personnel Costs

Year	Expenditure on Personnel								Personnel as Share of Defence Budget (%)	Equipment as Share of UK Defence Budget (%)
	Current Prices, £m				Constant Prices £m (1997/98 prices)					
	Armed Forces	Retired Armed Forces	Civilian Staff	Total	Armed Forces	Retired Armed Forces	Civilian Staff	Total		
1980/81	2,460	503	1,593	4,556	5,691	1,164	3,673	10,528	40.7	43.7
1985/86	3,510	899	1,970	6,379	5,957	1,520	3,343	10,819	35.6	45.7
1990/91	4,811	1,406	2,594	8,811	5,956	1,737	3,199	10,892	39.5	39.6
1995/96	6,150	-	2,374	8,524	6,499	-	2,500	8,999	39.6	39.7
1999/00	6,232	-	2,247	8,479	5,938	-	2,142	8,080	38.1	44.0

Notes: i. Over the period 1980-2000, the coverage of the defence budget has changed. From 1993/94, it included pension costs for currently serving military and civilian personnel, but not the pension payments to retired military personnel: these totals are excluded from the defence budget.  
ii. Constant prices based on GDP deflator.

Source: MoD (1999).

Various indicators on per capita spending for UK Service personnel are shown in Table 3. Over the 20 year period 1980 to 2000, all the indicators show upward trends in real terms. Both defence and equipment spending per UK Service person each rose by some 27% over 20 years. Following the end of the Cold War, real equipment spending per UK Service person rose by some 26% from 1990 to 2000, so providing support for the claim that the UK was creating 'smaller but better equipped forces.'

**Table 3. UK Per Capita Spending**

£s constant 1997/98 prices			
Year	Personnel Costs Per UK Service Person	Defence Spending Per UK Service Person	Equipment Spending Per UK Service Person
1980/81	17,751	80,686	35,260
1985/86	18,262	93,167	42,577
1990/91	19,483	90,203	35,720
1995/96	27,857	97,407	38,671
1999/00	28,603	102,153	44,947

- Notes:**
- Personnel costs are total personnel expenditures on Armed Forces, excluding pensions: see Table 2.
  - Defence spending per UK Service person is total UK defence budget divided by UK Service Personnel. Similarly for equipment spending.

**Source:** MoD (1999; 2000).

### *Efficiency*

Data on numbers, costs and spending per head are not indicators of efficiency in an AVF. In the private sector, efficiency is the result of competition, capital market pressures (bankruptcy and take-over threats) and the achievement of profitability. Successful firms sell their products in a competitive market place (eg. export markets) and profits enable them to survive and grow. Such 'incentive, policing and monitoring' mechanisms are absent from the armed forces. In contrast, the armed forces are non-profit bureaucracies which are monopoly suppliers of information, knowledge and military services and they are experts on the military production function (eg. the military production function for the army is whatever the top general says it is!). There are, however, methods by which government ministers, taxpayers and voters can assess the efficiency of their armed forces. Possibilities include military commanders being given fixed budgets and performance indicators with rewards for good performance; creating competition between the armed forces (eg. land-based versus carrier-borne aircraft); competitive tendering for a range of armed forces activities; and comparisons between manning levels in the armed forces and similar civilian activities (eg. civil airlines and military transport aircraft fleets). Another possibility is the use of international comparisons of manning levels in the armed forces. One such study found "... marked international differences in the ratios of men to equipment ..." in the armed forces of 15 nations (Owen, 1994, p 285). Compared with the average for 15 nations in 1993, the British army employed 23% more manpower for each unit of battlefield equipment, the RAF employed almost 50% more manpower per combat aircraft and the Royal Navy employed 31% less manpower per 1,000 tonnes of warship (Owen 1994, p 278). Whilst such international comparisons have their limitations (eg. problems of comparing

like with like; valuation of conscripts - eg. at 0.3 to 0.5 per regular), they provide a basis for asking the armed forces to explain and justify major difference in manning levels.

Table 4 shows a simple international comparison based on manning levels for heavy weapons. Admittedly, nations have different mixes and vintages of heavy weapons, but there are large variations in manning levels for the sample of countries. In 1997, UK manning levels were higher than Belgium, Canada, the USA (AVF nations) and Germany (draft ); and they were lower than the averages for the EU and NATO, although these groupings included nations which used draft forces. Comparisons of the UK with the USA are most relevant since the UK also maintains forces for a world power role. Applying US manning levels to the stock of UK heavy weapons suggests that the UK AVF could be reduced by over 35,000 to a level of some 182,000. Such comparative exercises are suggestive rather than conclusive: they can be used to require the UK armed forces to explain and justify their manning levels.



**Table 4. International Comparisons 1997**

Country	Number of Heavy Weapons	Number of Armed Forces Personnel (000s)	Number of Military Personnel per Heavy Weapon
EU	52,000	2,200	42.3
NATO	106,900	4,530	42.4
USA	48,020	1,554	32.4
UK	5,610	218	38.9
Belgium	1,180	43	36.4
France	6,860	475	69.2
Germany	11,220	335	29.9
Australia	1,240	57	45.9
Canada	2,440	66	27.1
New Zealand	190	10	52.6

- Notes:**
- i. Heavy weapons comprise armoured vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters and major fighting ships (BICC, 1999, p 148).
  - ii. The personnel figures are total numbers and have not been adjusted for conscript forces.

**Source:** BICC (1999).

#### *Recruitment and retention*

The UK needs "... to continue to recruit large numbers of predominantly young men and women against a background of adverse demographic trends, an increasingly competitive labour market and an expanding further and higher education sector" (Cmnd 4446, 1999, p34). Recruitment and retention has to be undertaken in an environment of 'overstretch and undermanning' requiring Service personnel to spend more time overseas, often in difficult conditions. These issues were addressed by the 1995 Independent Review which recommended personnel policies, strategies and structures to meet the needs of the armed forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bett Report: Bett, 1995). Amongst its recommendations, the Bett Report proposed the creation of a Services Personnel Board, a review of rank structure to reduce the number of ranks, rationalisation of trade structures with more emphasis on multi-skilling, measures to improve the employability of Service personnel when they leave the armed forces (lifelong learning), new and more flexible pay structures and improvements to family stability. These recommendations were reflected in 'A Policy for People' outlined in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review (Cmnd 3999, 1998).

Recruitment, training and personnel policies are costly. The UK spends some £100 million per annum on recruiting Service personnel (1998 prices) and the total budget for the armed forces personnel and training was almost £2.5 billion or some 11% of the defence budget for 2000/01 (MoD 2000). However, there has been little economic evaluation and cost-effectiveness analysis of such spending. For example, when designing the length of military employment contracts for different skills, evidence is needed on the costs of training and the minimum length of service required for the armed forces to obtain a return on

their training investments. Also, training in transferable skills will attract recruits who, when trained at the expense of the armed forces, will have incentives to leave and market their newly-acquired skills in the civilian economy (hence, the importance of the military employment contract in limiting premature quits).

For the future, the UK will need to consider various policies on recruitment and retention, ranging from short-term to longer-term solutions. The options include:

- i) Greater recruitment of women and ethnic minorities. For example, between 1975 and 2000, the proportion of females in the Services rose from 4% in 1975 to 8% in 2000 (MoD, 2000);
- ii) Greater use of civilians, including privatisation. For example, there are opportunities for all military flying training to be completely privatised (ie. private contractors providing bases, instructors, simulators, training aircraft and maintenance, so that the armed forces would pay for trained pilots and would no longer need to own these assets). Such privatisation needs to be carefully evaluated to identify its costs and benefits;
- iii) Re-appraising the need for a large proportion of young people in the armed forces. This might be reflected in a willingness to recruit people from higher age groups and to retain experienced, highly-motivated personnel to the age of 65. Such a reappraisal might be reinforced by technical progress. A possible 'revolution in military affairs' might result in the 'automated battlefield' where physical skills are replaced by robots, missiles and computers. Ultimately, the armed forces create a personnel recruitment problem by imposing rigid age constraints on entry (entry restricted to 16-24 year age range);
- iv) Re-appraising the mix of regular and reserve forces. Here, international comparisons suggest that the UK might be able to make a greater use of reserves (eg. in the RAF and Navy);
- v) Re-appraising the range of UK armed forces (ie. role specialisation). The defence economics problem cannot be ignored, so that in the long-run the UK will have to choose between providing a modern and 'well-balanced' army, navy and air force or using its limited resources to specialise in one or two of these forces (eg. maintaining the capital-intensive RAF at the expense of the labour-intensive Army).
- vi) Re-appraising commitments, especially the UK commitment to providing armed forces for a world-wide role. For example, the UK has major land force commitments in Germany involving almost 24,000 Army personnel. What would be the implications for UK security and protection if these forces were halved ?
- vii) Substituting equipment and technology for personnel (ie. capital for labour). New equipment needs to be assessed in relation to its potential for replacing personnel with such substitutions assessed between the armed forces, not only within each of the armed forces. For example, RAF combat aircraft based in the UK could replace some of the UK land forces based in Germany.
- viii) Re-assessing the role of independent army, navy and air forces. Continued reductions in the size of each of these forces, together with the trend towards joint forces, raises questions about the minimum viable size for each of these separate forces (eg. a single

defence force; or a merger between the air force and the army). Alternatively, arrangements are needed to allow new forces to enter the market (eg. space forces).

- ix) The greater use of financial constraints, including incentives and rewards for good performance and penalties for poor performance. The introduction of resource accounting and budgeting (RAB) will make the armed forces more aware of their use and costs of assets such as fighting equipment, land and buildings (cf. a private firm's balance sheet). But to achieve efficiency improvements, RAB needs output indicators and both opportunities and incentives to raise efficiency. Also, in view of the unique nature of the military employment contract which establishes 'property rights' in military personnel, serious consideration might be given to including the value of human capital in the military balance sheet.
- x) The European solution. The EU is developing a European defence policy reflected in its commitment to create a force of 50-60,000 personnel for the Petersberg tasks of peace-making, peace-keeping, crisis management and humanitarian assistance. A long-term possibility would be the creation of a single European army, navy and air force which would enable the EU to achieve the economies of scale and scope from a force closer in size to the US armed forces. For example, in 1999, the EU's armed forces totalled 1,794,118 persons compared with the US total of 1,371,500 persons; but the EU force was distributed between all its member states with costly duplication of defence ministries, command structures, training and logistics, as well as similar inefficiencies in weapons procurement (Heisbourg, 2000; Sandler and Hartley, 1999). UK involvement in a future single EU army, navy and air force would create different requirements for its AVF.

## Conclusion

The armed forces are always subject to change. In 1900, the UK defence budget was £3,176 million compared with a total of £22,318 million in 2000 (both in 1999/00 prices: MoD 2000); and the RAF was not formed until 1918. Numbers of UK Service personnel have changed dramatically falling from 4.91 million in 1945, to 696,000 in 1950 and 208,000 in 2000 (MoD, 2000).

Although the future is uncertain, it will be different from the present. New technology will create different types of weapons and new force structures, with new demands for military personnel (cf. the impact of aircraft and atomic weapons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). At the same time, the defence economics problem continuously reminds policy-makers of the need to make difficult choices (something has to go: the question is what goes?). Military personnel and an AVF are not immune from such choices. The result is a challenging research agenda for defence economists.

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**THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FORD.**

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In 1996, the end of conscription was decided by President Chirac. For most observers, this was quite a surprise. In 1994, the French White Paper still rejected the AVF and insisted on the political, strategic and budgetary advantages of conscription. The AVF was not an option. The transition process is now on and must be completed by the end of the year 2002.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the issues of this transition process. Section 1 briefly condenses the main factors governing the labour supply and establishes that a crucial problem for the transition period concerns civilian employees. Section 2, deals with the quality issue and tries to answer such traditional questions as selectivity of recruitment tests and women in the AVF.

## 1. General issues of AVF recruitment

In a conscription system, the draftees' motivation is not a problem: they are numerous and MoD is sure that the right man will be in the right place. On the contrary, in an AVF, MoD is an employer among many others; it must compete with firms and civilian ministries to attract volunteers with physical and intellectual skills.

### 1.1 *The supply of potential volunteers*

From a general point of view, the decision to enlist may be described in the light of standard occupational choice theory (Warner and Ash, 1995; Cooper, 1977)

Suppose that "economici homini" have to choose between two economic sectors. On the one hand is the civilian sector, on the other hand, the military sector. Each sector offers pay and non monetary benefits. In the military sector, negative incentives are very strong, for example, physical requirements, risk and even loss of life. Positive incentives are also important: pride to be a soldier, self actualization of vocation, opportunity to travel and discover foreign countries, experience in leadership and technical skills... Assume that individuals are able to weigh these positive and negative benefits and place an overall value on non-monetary advantages in each sector:  $r^M$  and  $r^C$ . If  $W^M$  is the military wage and  $W^C$  the civilian wage, the utility of joining the AVF is  $U^M = W^M + r^M$ . The utility of joining the civilian sector is  $U^C = W^C + r^C$ .

Potential volunteers join the services if  $U^M > U^C$  which implies that the pay differential ( $W^M - W^C$ ) exceeds their preference for civilian life ( $r = r^C - r^M$ )

Many factors influence individual choices. Among economic considerations, some are more important: the labour conditions in the AVF and in civilian sectors (wages and other labour conditions), the size of potential volunteers pools, the unemployment situation, the information flow that these volunteers receive (Duindam, 1999)

- *The labour conditions in the AVF.* These conditions involve monetary and non-monetary incentives such as military pay compared with civilian wages. Even if military is "more than just a job",  $W^M$  must not be very different from  $W^C$ ; otherwise, the potential volunteers may prefer the civilian sector, especially if they are qualified and experienced. The length of the contract and the nature of the mission are also of great significance: a lengthy contract is attractive, but only if the mission is interesting. Lastly, the supply of volunteers decreases if the risk significantly rises.

- *The reservoir of volunteers:* Even if a military calling is supposed to play a leading part in enlistment decisions, larger unemployment generates a higher supply of volunteers. The armed forces are in competition with civilian firms and MoD must take social security benefits into consideration.
- The labour market is characterized by *imperfect information*. Suppliers do not necessarily know the armed forces; they may overlook wages and incentives, especially positive incentives such as education opportunities, housing... In this perspective, the supply of volunteers increases if the flow of information increases. The given information must be as complete as possible, but communication and advertising are not costless. A general rule could be the following: armed forces must increase communication expenditure and recruitment efforts under the condition that the efficiency of these efforts is monitored.

## 1.2 *The recruitment of volunteers in a transition process*

In a short while (six years), the lowering of MoD personnel is impressive (-23%) The following table gives details of this fall (Trucy, 1999)

Table 1 The lowering of the armed forces

	1996	2002	Δ
Off.	38 456	38 189	-267
Non Comm. Off.	214 828	199 296	-15 532
Volunteers	44 552	92 527	47 975
	297 836	330 012	32 176
Civilian	73 747	83 023	9 276
Draftees	201 498	27 171	-174 327
	573 081	440 206	-132 875

This table suggests three main remarks.

### 1.2.1 *The mobility issue*

The number of civil servants is increasing on a small scale: +12%. At first sight, this is quite a surprise because moving from conscription to AVF is often equated with a civilianization process. Is the French situation an exception to that general rule? In fact, this small increase hides an important transformation, both quantitative and qualitative. Arsenal workers are diminishing in a huge proportion whereas administrative employees are increasing in military units. The overall numbers of civilians in MoD does not change a lot but there are many fewer people in factories and many more in battalions and bases.

This transformation raises many problems. The most important is the mobility issue.

From a geographic point of view, factories are, for historical and political reasons (threat from the East, hypercentralization...), generally located in South-West of France or near Paris whereas battalions are located in the East or North of France. Arsenal workers are civil servants; MoD cannot oblige them to move from one place to the other; most of them refuse to leave their homes and families.

From an occupational point of view, blue collars cannot be transformed into employees overnight. Arsenal manpower consists of experienced workers, with high wages and

influential trade-unions. Jobs in battalions and bases are often less interesting and pay is lower. Consequently, a lot of slots (more than 7.000) are not filled and labour circumstances are changing for the worse. Three examples may be highlighted.

- Under the draft system, uninteresting tasks were assigned to the draftees: washing-up, gathering leaves in the courtyard, handling of materials... In the battalions where such jobs are not filled, menial but vital tasks have to be assigned to regular soldiers. Volunteers are removed from operational positions to kitchen or driving jobs ... From Rambo to Cinderella, the route is deceptive. If the substitution of missing civilian employees by volunteers becomes the usual rule of manpower management, MoD could have to deal with significant problems of recruitment: some volunteers may resign before the end of their contract; many of them may quit after the first term; potential volunteers may be discouraged.
- The question is even more sensitive with regard to the NCOs. Under the draft system, NCOs were organizing tasks and ordering draftees to do the job. They had a real responsibility in managing their units. In many cases, these units have vanished into thin air. Sometimes, NCOs have to take the broom into their own hands. For many, the shift to an AVF is associated with depreciation of military labour circumstances and military status.
- Draftees were also numerous in health services, mess halls, military schools... In some cases, service costs are increasing; in others, quality or availability is lowered. Here too, service members perceive this transformation as a breaking down of tradition and a deterioration of the quality of life.

Problems in civilian mobility adversely affect labour benefits and family facilities. They may have a negative influence on the supply of volunteers.

### 1.2.2 *Failure in national service volunteers*

In 2002, draftees will have disappeared but the MoD hopes that 27.000 young males and females will engage for one year's military service. In spite of the financial incentives (minimum wage and bonus), this plan is breaking down. The explanation is closely related to the similarity of these volunteers status and the one of regular recruits: same pay, same job... but the clear realization that they are soldiers on the cheap.

### 1.2.3 *Provisional (?) success in Army volunteer recruitment*

Official publications (Parliamentary reports especially) show that the recruiting process is on the right track from a quantitative point of view (Vinçon, 1999, Trucy, 1999). This is naturally a crucial issue. In 1996, 30.000 volunteers were on the books. In 2002, 66.000 will be needed.

Table 2 Regular volunteers in the AVF Army

	1996	2002
Regular volunteers	30 202	66 681
% Army (uniform pers.)	12,70%	48%
% Army (overall)	11,30%	38,60%

During this transition period, 10.000 young people must join the Army each year: 6.000 to extend the forces and 4.000 to replace those who quit, become a NCO... At the beginning of the 1990's, only

3.000 new volunteers were needed each year. This is a tremendous change in human resource management.

In spite of the difficulty, the recruitment process seems to be successful: enough volunteers to fill the slots, no drop in selection rate.

Table 3 Effectiveness of the recruitment process

	1997	1998		
	$\Sigma$	M	F	$\Sigma$
New regular volunteers	15.662	12.454	3.025	15.479
Suited and oriented volunteers	7.620	8.080	1.457	10.416
Enlisted	3.662	5.987	533	6.520

The recruitment process is much more productive. The number of "new files" is quite the same in 1997 and in 1998, about 15.000 persons (four fifth males) But, 42% of all volunteers are enlisted in 1998 (23% in 1997) Two reasons may explain this dramatic improvement: suitable volunteers are more numerous: the recruitment process is more effective.

In sample surveys, battalions' commanders do not complain about the quality of recruits.

Nevertheless, this good result may be weakened in the near future.

- First, a significant part of the current volunteers are young people who discover armed forces while they are draftees. ("prior-service enlistment") They do not come from a military background and they had no prior information about military careers. In 1996 and 1997, the percentage of "prior-service enlistment" increased to 60% of total enlistments. In 1999, it returned to the initial level: 40%. The end of the draft raises two questions in this regard. The most obvious one is that when the draft is over, this source of volunteers will run dry. An important effort in advertising will be necessary to compensate for the lack of information. The second problem is almost more important but no obvious solution is available in this case. Under the draft system, military leaders had enough numbers to judge physical, psychological or occupational skills of the draftees. This opportunity does not exist anymore if the Army has to choose volunteers at first sight. Wrong choices may increase in the future and the quality of recruitment may diminish.
- A second upsetting point is the academic results of the recruits. In 1998, only one sixth of the enlisted volunteers passed the "Baccalauréat", more than two third a technical degree, more than one tenth failed at exams.

Table 4 Academic level of the enlisted volunteers

	1997	1998		
	$\Sigma$	M	F	$\Sigma$
Exam failure	12,2	13,9	1,1	12,9
Tech. Degree	68,7	72,7	45,2	70,5
Baccalauréat	17,5	12,8	48,8	15,7
Bac +2	1,3	0,3	4,5	0,7

An optimistic analysis would insist on the fact that technical skills (mechanics, electricians...) are certainly useful in the Army. But, this favorable opinion must be mitigated: four fifth of the recruits belong to the less educated part of the population. These volunteers offer important blind spots in basic knowledge: oral or written expression, reckoning... This could be a serious handicap in achievement of sensitive or complex missions.

- A third problem is outlined by Senator François Trucy. In the South of France, the Navy received volunteers coming from local agencies of job placement. These candidates were strongly recommended by the state administration. Officers quickly complain about indiscipline, deceit... on the part of these recruits. More NCOs are needed to keep a close eye on the situation; the rate of punishment is unusually high; drug addiction is frequent. From an operational point of view, reliability of these recruits is uncertain at best and the Navy refuses to entrust them with arms.

At least, making an assessment is quite difficult and judgment must be very careful.

On the one hand, the Army succeeded in recruiting ten thousand volunteers a year since 1997, three times the figure of 1990. Generally speaking, quantity and quality of these recruits seem to come up to the MoD expectations. On the other hand, growing problems are obvious and the quality of future recruits may be questionable.

## 2. The quality of future recruits.

As a general rule, AVF supporters suggest that one should enlarge the volunteer's pool in order to preserve the rate of selection. We believe that this may become an important issue for the French armed forces in a near future. Concerning this question, two dimensions can be scrutinized.

### 2.1 *What qualitative requirements towards volunteers?*

Both conscripts and volunteers have to pass physical, academic... tests. Armed forces have been practicing this kind of examination for a long time. Nevertheless, a question must be answered as the draft is ending: do volunteers have to meet the same requirements as in the draft days?

To explain the meaning of this question, we have to consider the selection process as a barrier, which must be high enough to reject those volunteers that are not suitable for the armed forces, but not too high so suitable volunteers are not rejected by the selection process. (Duindam, 1999)

Four situations may occur:

Table 5 Requirements and recruits

	Accepted	Rejected
Suitable	(1) Correct	(2) Incorrect
Non suitable	(4) Incorrect	(3) Correct

If the selection process is working well, suitable volunteers are accepted (1) and non-suitable volunteers are rejected (3) Two kinds of errors may happen. Suitable volunteers are rejected

(2); this is named a fault of the first kind. Non suitable volunteers are accepted (4); this is named a fault of the second kind. If the barrier is too low, errors of the first kind are decreasing but errors of the second kind are increasing. If requirements are immoderately hard to please, non-suitable volunteers are rejected (3) but many suitable volunteers are also rejected (2): the baby is thrown out with the bath water.

In a draft system, leaders of the selection process may allow themselves to be tempted to raise the height of the barrier which means an arbitration in favor of the first kind of error. Why would it be so? A cost perspective is necessary to answer this question.

- In the draft system, selection centers are swarming with conscripts. If a suitable conscript is rejected, armed forces can easily find a substitute. There is no fear of post vacancy and no "loss of production" is incurred. The opportunity cost of a suitable conscript's rejection is null. On the contrary, the acceptance of a non-suitable conscript is costly from several points of view. Setting the wrong man in the wrong place implies wasted outlays (training, making good the damages...) as well as management costs (punishment...) and total or partial failure of the mission. The first kind of error is not of importance for the institution whereas the second one could have severe consequences. The selection process could be shaped in order to take the best part of the available human resource. In reaction, qualified conscripts may organize evasion strategies.
- In the AVF system, acceptance of a non-suitable candidate is as costly as in the draft system. But, the cost of the first kind of error is quite different. MoD has to deal with a limited supply of military manpower. If a suitable volunteer is rejected, another suitable individual has to be found. While recruitment is in progress, the post is unoccupied and the corresponding mission is suspended. An arbitration is imperative: on the one hand, the armed forces risk to set the wrong man at the wrong place; on the other hand, armed forces risk not to be able to perform their duties.

The draft system meant important and cost free human resource: scarcity and cost are inherent in AVF. Choice criteria must evolve. Armed forces should try to reach a new equilibrium taking three factors in account:

- The management cost of the recruitment system: low barriers speed up the selection process because the choice of enlisted soldiers arises among a limited number of volunteers.
- The cost deriving from errors of the first kind: the armed forces are suffering an opportunity cost the importance of which is related to the unaccomplished mission
- The cost deriving from errors of the second kind: the importance of this financial cost depends on several factors: how unsuited is the volunteer, how long is his or her contract, what sort of mission is he or she in charge of, what kind of resources is he or she responsible for...

In the French case, existing volunteers still seem to be large enough, so that massive errors of the first kind seem quite unlikely. But, opportunity cost is often invisible or hidden. If we consider the raising above- mentioned difficulties, the question of the relevant requirements is on the agenda.

## **2.2 *How many females in the armed forces?***

As a general statement for economists, professionalisation is synonymous with a greater role for women in the military. Two main arguments are usually invoked in this perspective.

### 2.2.1 Budgetary constraints

Within a few years, volunteers' demand increased threefold: 3.000 in 1992, 10.000 in 1997. Considering this fact, enlargement of the manpower reservoir is of great significance in all respects.

From a qualitative point of view, because of traditional demand limitations, many women with high quality (education, physical training, vocation...) are likely to be available. It would be difficult to deny that armed forces are standing to gain if high quality women are taking the place of poor-quality males. This point is of great importance in the French military as far as the academic level of women is substantially higher than the men's academic level (see table 4: one half of enlisted women (only 13 % of the men) passed the "baccalauréat")

The increasing of manpower supply due to feminization has a second advantage. It relaxes the pressure on ordinary pay and allowances. In the French case, this result is important in relative terms because of the growing distortion of the budgetary structure. Equipment outlays ("Titre V") have been dramatically falling (from 52% of overall outlays in 1988 to 49% in 1995 and 46% in 1999) and the fraction of pays and social insurance contributions is constantly on the increase. As a consequence, operations and maintenance outlays are hardly crumbling.

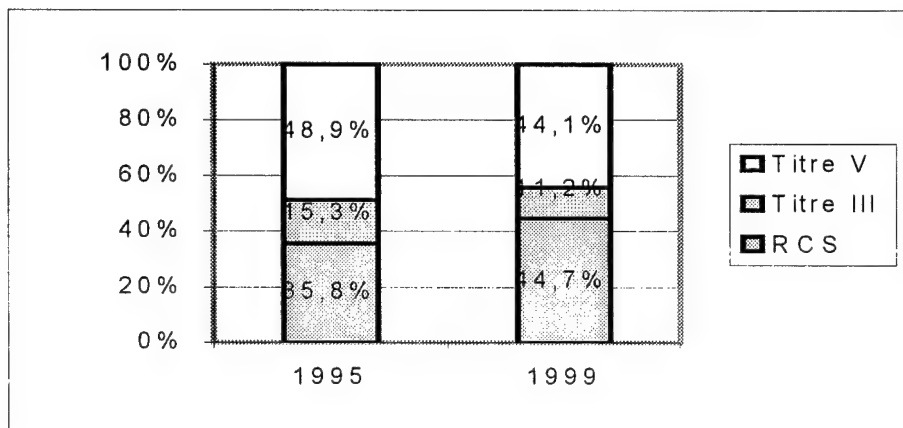


Figure 1 Budget structure (1995-1999)

This growing fraction is neither a surprise nor an anomaly. But, it exerts considerable pressure on training and equipment expenditures. Scarcity of the male resource may constitute an aggravating circumstance in this regard especially if the current improvement of the employment situation remains for a long time.

### 2.2.2 Women's capacities

A traditional argument of those who want to preserve armed forces as a male organization relates to physical weakness, absenteeism... The average woman is less strong than the average man is; she is more often pregnant and so on. This kind of arguments is less and less relevant.

- Many empirical results prove that women often have a better discipline and support stronger tensions at work. They are sometimes pregnant but they are seldom alcoholic, drug addicted, deserters... (Duindam, 1999, p.109) Moreover, technical skills prevail over physical aptitudes in modern armed forces; the ratio combat functions / non-

combat functions is decreasing. An increasing number of posts are without question suitable for "normal" or even persons, men or women, with counter-advantages such as small size (see the research by Fletcher and alii, 1994).

- We may also argue that the end of the conscription lessens the physical requirements. In the defense production function, labour becomes a rare and expensive factor. The MoD has to replace it by equipment. After the appropriate military-capital substitution, much physical work will be eliminated ("press button technology"). As for remaining physical tasks, a substantial fraction will benefit by ergonomic and technical progress. For example, the first cell phones were heavy and bulky, so using them on a hilly ground was rather painful. A few years later, even an anorexic top-model can call her friends during hours without dropping with fatigue. Armed forces are not an exception to the general rule of civilian firms: the modern worker is no more an ox (as Taylor used to say) but a person endowed with a brain. To this regard, armed forces seem to have difficulty to convince themselves that physical strength is nothing more than a way to achieve a mission. If the mission can be done without physical effort, its importance is not diminished.
- Last but not least, the question of the average physical aptitude is not relevant. If physical strength is really needed, the efficient recruitment process relies on individual (not average) capacities, independently of the fact that the individual is a male or a female. The "men only" strategy implies expensive errors of the first kind (suitable women are rejected) and, because the supply reservoir is restricted, a number of second kind errors (non-suitable men are accepted). As a special sort of protectionism, the "men only" strategy produces debilitating consequences mentioned by free-trade theorists.

## Conclusion

In 1996, the French president took most of experts and executive unawares. Today, armed forces are in the middle of the ford. At the end of the Y2K, we may judge that width and depth of the river are less than estimated. Armed forces seem to face an adequate supply of volunteers. But, the up slope on the opposite bank looks abrupt. Tiny signals point out eddies and waters holes before long. Some of these traps are beyond the reach of MoD: economic growth, improvement of labour market, international relationship... That is why a strong policy is needed to preserve the current recruits quality.

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## **THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**



**RECRUITMENT TO THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE  
BELGIUM**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION.

On July 3, 1992, the Belgian government decided to radically transform the Belgian Armed Forces. The proposal was made by the newly appointed Defence Minister, Leo Delcroix, against the advice of the Joint Chief of Staff. The Delcroix plan called for suspending the draft,<sup>1</sup> effective in 1994, adopting an All-Volunteer format, slashing by half personnel strength, and, the plan's key element, freezing the Defence budget at a nominal level of BEF 98 billion (around 2.43 billion Euro), until the end of 1997 – which meant a zero nominal growth, and in fact, a negative growth in real term of Defence expenditures. By so doing, Belgium was the first country on the European continent to effectively end conscription after the Cold War.

All those reform plans of the Belgian armed forces were, to a large extent, a direct result of the technological revolution underway in our societies, the declining legitimacy of the draft and the breathtaking changes that took place in Eastern Europe. On a more immediate level, however, the plan became imperative for financial reasons. It was part of a government-wide effort to try reducing the huge Belgian budget deficit in order to fall within the Maastricht convergence norms. The very great unpopularity of the draft in Belgium was also a very important contributing factor explaining the rapidity of the introduction of the reform and its implementation. The idea of suspending the draft was indeed first informally aired by the Defence Minister in the first quarter of 1992. In the absence of hostile reactions by opposition parties, the decision was formally taken by the government in July of the same year, a extremely short period when one knows the usually long time it takes in Belgium to make and implement major decisions.

Although the restructuring of the Belgian armed forces was supposed to be completed in 1998, the process is still going on to this date and the end of the transition has now been pushed back to 2015. This delay has been caused mainly by problems at the human resource management level, namely difficulties in trying to downsize the force, an ageing personnel structure and recruiting shortfalls. This has led to a radical new restructuring plan, called Strategic Modernisation Plan (2000-2015), presented in May 2000 by the present Defence Minister, André Flahaut.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the ongoing radical restructuring process of the Belgian military organisation and to analyse what are the problems and challenges facing the Belgian armed forces in terms of manpower in general and recruitment in particular.

## 2 THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE BELGIAN ARMED FORCES

The present restructuring of the Belgian armed forces is an on-going process that began after the end of the Cold War. So far, the process can be divided into three main phases: the initial reform plan (1992-1997), the so-called Delcroix Plan, from the name of the then Defence Minister, that ended the draft; a transition phase (1997-2000), initiated by Jean-Pol Poncelet, the Defence Minister at that time, characterised by a series of accompanying measures aimed at trying to solve some remaining manpower problems; and the Strategic Modernisation Plan (2000-2015), initiated by the present Defence Minister, André Flahaut in May 2000.

### 2.1.1 THE DELCROIX PLAN (1992-1997)

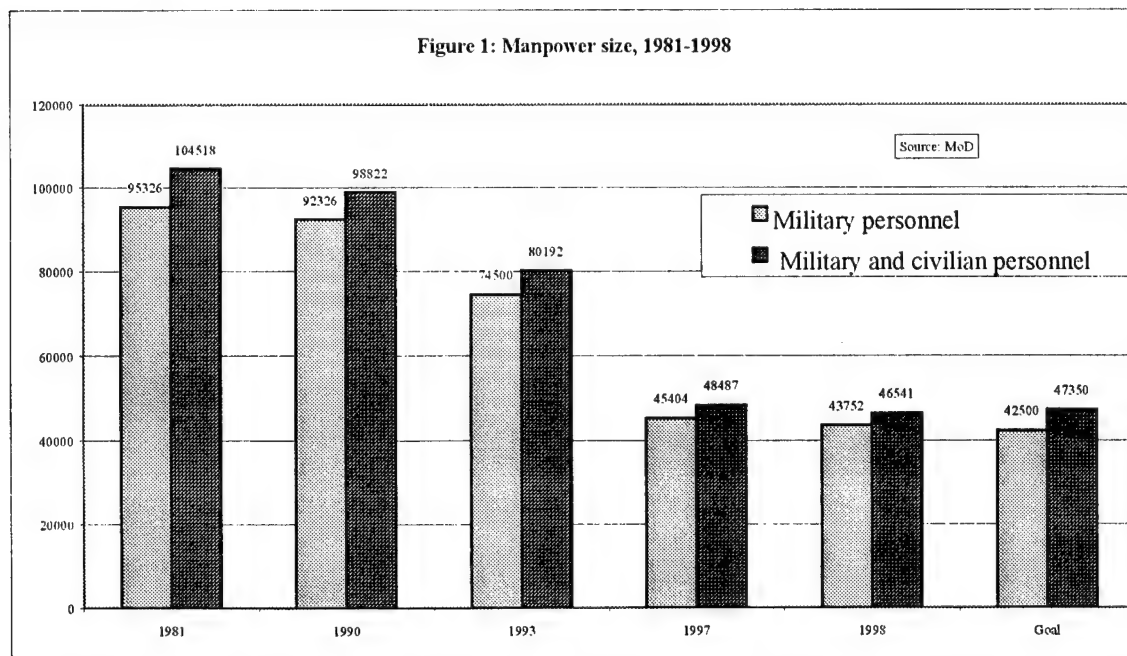
On the basis of the decisions taken during the Cabinet meeting of July 1992, the General Staff was asked to design a restructuring plan for the Belgian armed forces. For the Army, the most affected service, the plan received the acronym BEAR 97, for Belgian ARmy 97. This plan aimed at adapting, beginning in 1995, the Belgian armed forces to the new NATO military organisation. The plan was to be completed by the end of 1997.

The so-called Delcroix plan was built around three basic principles:<sup>2</sup>

1. the Defence budget must remain under the 98 billion BEF limit until end 1997, or around 2.43 billion EUR
2. the draft was to be abolished in 1994
3. Belgium must keep fulfilling her international obligations (NATO, Eurocorps, etc.).

The plan foresaw furthermore the return of most of the Belgian Armed forces stationed in Germany to Belgium, the so-called Operation Reforbel. From 14,390 military men and women in 1990, the Belgian military presence in Germany was reduced to 2,318 in 1998.<sup>3</sup> They are part of the 17th bilingual Brigade stationed in Spich, near Cologne.

As far as equipment was concerned, various weapon systems were withdrawn. For example, in the Army, 202 of the 334 Leopard tanks were taken out of service. In the Air Force, 45 F-16s (out of 108 in 1992) have been decommissioned and all the Mirage IV were sold – to Chile. In other words, the restructured NATO committed Air Force is down to almost half of its 1991 capacity. The Navy has also been cut in half. One frigate, seven mine hunters, four mine sweepers and two command and support vessels were decommissioned in July 1993.





As far as personnel strength is concerned (figure 1), the restructuring of the Belgian armed forces proceeded in three phases. In 1988 and 1990, the first two phases, initiated by the then Defence Minister, Guy Coëme, were rather cautious and reflected the still uncertain emerging geopolitical environment: the Soviet Union had not yet disappeared. They essentially consisted of a 20 % reduction in overall scale and volume of Belgian troops in Germany, from 23,000 to 4,000. The third phase, i.e. the Delcroix plan, which began in 1993 and was supposed to be implemented by the end of 1997, was much more radical. It envisioned a 50 % manpower reduction, from around 80,000 to 42,500 soldiers (40,000 active-duty personnel and 2,500 personnel in training). These measures had to be implemented without forced dismissals.

The restructured Belgian military was to be organised in the following way:

- the Army would keep 27,500 soldiers, which meant a 49 % size reduction
- the Air force 10,000 jobs, or a 42 % reduction
- and the Navy 2,500 men and women, or a 41 % reduction.

As far as percentages were concerned, the Army would represent 69 % of total armed forces strength, the Air Force 25% and the Navy 6%.

It was envisioned that the bulk of the future recruits, especially at the enlisted level, would be short-term volunteers (2 to 5 years maximum), so as to have a younger age structure.

In addition to the active-duty military personnel, a reserve of maximum 30,000 men was to be constituted. These reservists would be available for a call-up in the event of an armed conflict. During a first phase (i.e. until the year 2,000), the reserve would have been composed of the last draftees, those who did their military service during the last few years of the draft, and the short-term volunteers, who, at the end of their contract, have to serve for a certain number of years in the reserve.

For the long run, Defence Minister Leo Delcroix had originally proposed to integrate military service into an overall national service. Such a national service would have been organised on a voluntary basis, with some social and financial selective incentives (such as pay, priority for employment, etc.). In a first phase, this service would have involved only a few thousands individuals. Young people would have been offered the choice between a service in the military and a service in various welfare or cultural sectors (such as hospital, aid to handicapped people, aid to old people, foreign aid, humanitarian sector, etc.). However, the great unpopularity of the former draft system and the high costs of such a national service system meant that his proposal was not accepted by the other members of the Cabinet and the plan was abandoned.

## **2.2 PONCELET'S ACCOMPANYING MEASURES<sup>4</sup>**

Originally, the transition phase was to be completed by January 1, 1998. It soon became clear, however, that this target date would not be met. In addition to the end of the draft, the Delcroix Plan, or professionalization plan, required also a significant downsizing of the career component of the forces. Around 600 officers and 3,700 NCOs were to be made redundant. From the start, however, the government had

promised not to layoff anyone: measures were to be found to release excess personnel in a socially acceptable way. The hope was that, through a series of accompanying measures, by January 1, 1998, the Belgian armed forces would reach its 42,500 maximum authorised strength level. The initial release measures however, such as transfers to public administrations, to the administrative and logistical command of the Gendarmerie, or to the police which had been introduced at the beginning of the restructuring phase, did not produce the expected results. In 1996, there was still a surplus of 500 officers and 3,700 NCOs.

Faced with this failure, Jean-Pol Poncelet, the then Defence Minister, was given permission by the Council of Ministers to postpone the end of the transitory phase from January 1 to December 31, 1998 and to take extra measures in order to further reduce manpower strength. On the one hand, recruitment was practically reduced to zero at the enlisted level. On the other hand, new measures were implemented (see later).

Jean-Pol Poncelet also proposed the creation of a new reserve force by 2010 consisting of two parts, a compulsory system for ex-volunteer personnel and a voluntary reserve composed of civilians. In a first phase, it was planned to recruit about 300 voluntary reservists in 2000. The plan, however, has yet to be implemented.

Finally, conscious of the challenges facing the Belgian military in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and of the necessity of a certain political and social consensus over the future missions, roles, means and structure of the armed forces, Poncelet initiated a large parliamentary debate that lasted more than a year. The debate, however, fell short of its initial ambitions, i.e. to provide a long term and clear framework for the restructuring of the military.<sup>5</sup>

### **2.3 THE STRATEGIC MODERNIZATION PLAN (2000-2015)<sup>6</sup>**

Although the accompanying measures taken by the preceding Defence Minister had led to a modest reduction of manpower size, serious problems remained. Furthermore and more importantly, in the eyes of many, the 1992 restructuring of the Belgian armed forces had not gone far enough. While it had replaced conscription with an all-volunteer format, it had not really touched the old structures inherited from the Cold War. For example, unlike the Dutch reform, the manpower and equipment reductions in Belgium had merely been linear and across the board, indicating an absence of strategic vision. The 1998 national parliamentary debate had also failed to provide a clear blueprint for the future. Such a strategic review and vision had to wait for the new coalition government of Liberals, Socialists and Greens that came to power in June 1999. It was prepared by André Flahaut, the French-speaking Socialist new Defence Minister and was approved by the government in May 2000.

In sharp contrast to the 1992 plan which was entirely driven by and articulated around two objectives, i.e. the suppression of the draft and a reduction of the defence budget in real terms, the new plan is built on a more logical foundation: it begins by defining the future missions of the Belgian armed forces and from that derives the structure and means they will need to carry out these missions.

### 2.3.1 BASIC PRINCIPLES

The new Strategic Modernisation Plan 2000-2015 proposes a sweeping reorganisation of the Belgian armed forces intended, through a smaller but better equipped and more efficient force, to enhance Belgium's ability to project forces capable of operating across the full spectrum of military operations in concert with NATO and EU allies. In fact, it moves the Belgian military toward a truly post-modern military organisation.

According to the plan, the four main missions of the Belgian armed forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) the protection and security of Belgium and its allies
- 2) participation to the management of crises (peace support operations)
- 3) what the plan calls "defence diplomacy" in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (monitoring, arms control verifications, military assistance, preventive diplomacy, confidence-building measures)
- 4) repatriation of Belgians from crisis spots around the world (but especially in former colonies), or "Non combatant Evacuation Operations" (NEO).

With the exception of NEOs which are decided at a purely national level and are carried out independently, the deployment of Belgian troops abroad will take place exclusively within a multinational framework. From this, it follows 1) that some degree of specialisation is not only feasible but also desirable and 2) that one must adopt a more modular, flexible structure (force packages) for the various force components, capable of putting rapidly into place elements that can then be integrated in a multinational force. It also means that if, on paper, national defence remains one of the main missions of the Belgian armed forces, on a practical level, the accent is clearly put on the new multinational peace-support operations.

The plan is structured around the following three basic principles:<sup>8</sup>

- *Joint* (interforces) is the rule, non-joint the exception (one joint staff, one HRM management)
- *Combined* (multinational) where it is possible (thus need for integration and interoperability)
- *CIMIC* (civil-military co-operation) is imperative (with other national departments, with NGOs, etc).

The government has opted for a joint structure with as few layers as possible (delaying) and maximum inter-service integration in order to be 100 % operational with less personnel. The intention is to have a clear distinction between "core" activities and support or "corporate" functions, where core functions are clients of corporate services. The core activities will be co-ordinated by a joint staff in co-ordination with European partners (combined). The corporate activities will be structured along functional domains so as to eliminate redundancies between services (joint). Furthermore, co-operation will be sought with allied armed forces and with the civilian sector (combined).

### 2.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Concretely, the main features of the plan are the following:<sup>9</sup>

- The defence budget remains at about 2.5 billion Euro, adjusted annually for inflation
- Personnel strength will be further reduced from 44,500 to 39,500, allowing personnel expenditures to be cut from 1.38 billion Euro to 1.10 billion Euro by 2015. This downsizing should essentially affect the corporate (support) activities through rationalisation, elimination of redundancies and outsourcing. Saving achieved through personnel cuts will be channelled into procurement
- The four independent Forces and Services are replaced by ground, air, sea and medical components. The accent is put on jointness of services
- The Army is to be transformed from a force reliant on track vehicles to an all-wheeled component. The three existing mechanised brigades, which are manned at about 65 %, will be regrouped into two fully manned and equipped light mechanised brigades
- The Paracommando Brigade will be organised into a fully manned light airmobile brigade. To support the brigade the aviation group will receive 10 to 15 transport helicopters after 2005. The brigade's mobility will be further enhanced by the allocation of 100 of the approximately 400 armoured utility vehicles planned for the army
- To improve Belgium's force projection mobility, the air force's 11 C-130 Hercules will be replaced by 7 Airbus A400M transports around 2007. The navy will complement this capability through the acquisition of one roll-on/roll-off ship to be built between 2006 and 2009
- The 90 air force F-16 fighters will continue to be modernised (Mid-Life Update) and kept until around 2015, at which time they should be replaced by a smaller number (48) of multirole fighters
- The navy's three frigates will be replaced by two multi-purposes ships around 2010. Six of the service's seven minehunters will undergo a capability upgrade and the potential for equipping them with a minesweeping capability will be studied. However, the planned acquisition of four coastal minehunters has been cancelled because in the words of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstad, "this Cold War-vintage concept was no longer in line with today's requirements. It is a type of ship we don't need".<sup>10</sup>

## 3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BETWEEN 1992 AND 2000.

### 3.1 INITIAL MEASURES (1992-1997)

Among all the challenges posed by the Delcroix Plan, the most important was, without doubt, the decision to suspend the draft in January 1994, less than two years

after the government's decision to restructure the armed forces. The suspension of military service, especially so quickly, posed serious adaptation problems.

While, in 1992, compulsory military service still filled one third of the manpower needs of the Belgian armed forces, the military had now to recruit all its personnel on the labour market. In other words, very quickly, the armed forces were forced to become competitive on the labour market and to offer potential recruits career or training perspectives attractive enough to lure them.

The absence of draftees was particularly felt in the technical, service and staff branches, branches that employed, sometimes highly skilled, draftees in civilian functions: computer specialists, engineers, doctors, language teachers, for instance. It is in these specialised civilian functions that draftees were the most difficult to replace by volunteers or career personnel. But conscripts also assumed a large number of non specialised non military tasks, such as cleaning, maintenance, or catering, which are costly to entrust to short-term volunteers. In the 1980s, two-thirds of the Belgian conscripts were employed in such non specialised service functions.<sup>11</sup>

So, it became clear very soon that the switch to an all-volunteer force, in order to succeed, required a fundamental reform of employment contracts. The Joint Staff therefore proposed a series of measures in order to try to make enlistment in the armed forces more attractive.

These measures can be divided into three categories:<sup>12</sup>

1. the need to adapt employment contracts to the new geopolitical environment and to the new missions of military organisations
2. the need to improve the administrative and financial statutes of the various personnel categories
3. the need to insure that the personnel structure does not become too old. In other words, the new policy had to develop a system that keeps the military organisation young.

### **3.1.1 ADAPTATION TO THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.**

Following the multiplication of peace-support operations, the Belgian military defined three types of situations in which a soldier can be engaged, and decided to modulate pay and bonus in function of the situation.

One now has the following situations:

- peacetime: it includes training, normal service, exercises and manoeuvres periods
- engagement periods: humanitarian missions, peace-keeping or peace-enforcing missions, observation missions (for NATO, the EU, the UN, etc.)
- wartime.

### **3.1.2 PROPOSED MEASURES TO FACILITATE RECRUITMENT.**

In order to make the pay system more attractive, it was decided to change it on the basis of the following principles:

- introduction of new grades in order to have more attractive careers, especially at the level of enlisted personnel
- more rapid pay increases at the beginning of a career rather than later on
- introduction of new, more objective job evaluation systems
- possibility of more rapid promotions in order to encourage effort and performance.

### 3.1.3 PROPOSED MEASURES TO KEEP THE ORGANIZATION YOUNG.

In order to keep the military organisation young and to feed the reserve, the government decided to elaborate a new contract for short-term volunteers. This single measure has been, without doubt, the Achilles' heel of the reform, at least as far as manpower policy was concerned. It was already on this point that the two preceding professionalization attempts, in 1960 with the so-called "NATO technicians" and in 1974 with the "professionalization plan", had failed (Manigart, 1993). These two trials had also been based on the recruitment of short-term volunteers to replace draftees. Both times, the plans failed, in part because these short-term contracts did not correspond with the expectations of potential recruits. These were mainly interested in a long-term contract.<sup>13</sup>

All surveys on this topic have consistently shown that what Belgians expect the most from their job is job security.<sup>14</sup> The lower the educational level, the more importance one attaches to job security, because the less options one has. The problem was that, as with the preceding reform attempts, there was a mismatch between what potential recruits expected from the military and what the military offered. Furthermore, in the preceding reforms, not only was there a mismatch, but, more seriously, the military made voluntary attempts to cover up this mismatch. The military indeed offered short-term contracts between two and maximum ten years, but it in effect misled people by assuring them that, after six years, they could become career personnel. Technically, it was not an outright lie, but, in practice, the possibilities to become *lifer* were quite small: the military omitted to say this. Because they wanted to become career soldiers, volunteers tended to remain in the military for as long as possible. After the ten years limit, however, they were kicked out of the armed forces and it was then very difficult for them to find a new job. The military had not given them transferable skills, especially for those serving in combat specialities.

In order not to repeat past mistakes, the new short-term contracts envisioned in the 1992 plan were really short-term. The maximum enlistment term was to be five years, with a minimum of two years. In any case, privates would have had to leave the army at 25. Furthermore, outplacement guidance was –theoretically– to be offered at the end of the contract, as well as a separation bonus. Because of the budget freeze and personnel redundancies, recruitment of short-term volunteers, however, never really started.

## 3.2 ACCOMPANYING MEASURES TO ELIMINATE PERSONNEL REDUNDANCIES (1998-2000).<sup>15</sup>

Faced with a continuing manpower surplus and an ageing personnel structure, especially at the officers and NCOs level, Defence Minister Poncelet introduced four new measures, inspired by what is being done in Belgian restructuring firms:

1. the introduction, on a voluntary basis, of the 4-day working week, i.e. working on a four-fifth arrangement

2. the possibility of early departures based on a half-time arrangement for those who were less than five years from retirement
3. the possibility of career interruption, or temporary withdrawal from the job (sabbatical)
4. the full release of senior officers (majors and above) and of NCOs, always on a voluntary basis, when being less than five years from retirement; for junior officers, the same possibility was also given, but only to those who were one year from retirement.

These measures were more successful than the preceding ones and allowed for a substantial reduction of manpower size: on May 1, 1999, 2,543 people had taken advantage of the above measures and had left – partially or totally – the armed forces. At the same time, a budgetary saving was obtained given that those who had left were older and therefore had more seniority and were paid more than younger personnel. These personnel savings were used to again begin recruiting younger personnel. All these measures were not, however, sufficient to reach the target of 42,500 soldiers. In 1999, there was still a small surplus of personnel and so a new delay was obtained, until December 31, 2002.

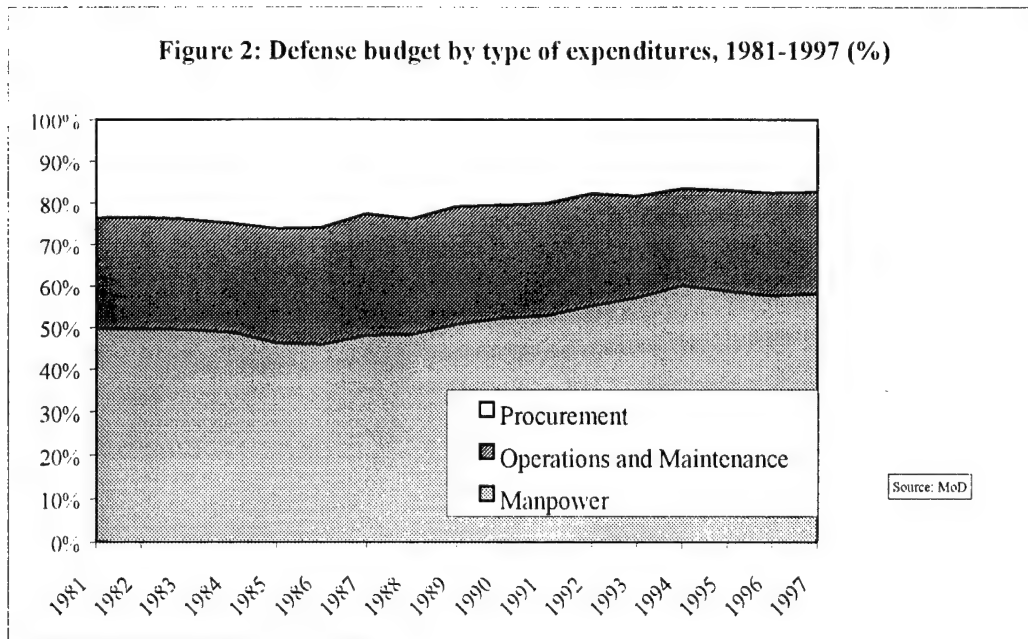
#### 4 PROBLEMS REMAINING IN 2000

##### 4.1 THE AGEING OF PERSONNEL.

Despite the just described measures to encourage people to voluntarily leave the armed forces, there are still too many NCOs compared to privates and too many career personnel in the age group 30-40 years old in all rank categories.<sup>16</sup> This ageing of the Belgian military is naturally the combined result of the suspension of the draft and the substantial downsizing of the organisation. With the suspension of the draft, the Belgian armed forces have been deprived of a continuous supply of young, skilled people at lower wage costs. It goes without saying that, at a time when the number of long-term peacekeeping operations abroad has multiplied, such a skewed age structure is damaging operational effectiveness.

In order to optimise the age pyramid, the government has decided in its Strategic Plan 2000-2015,<sup>17</sup> on the one hand, to continue the selective measures aimed at encouraging around 1,000 middle-aged personnel (30-40 years old) to voluntarily leave the military and, on the other hand, to recruit young volunteers. The aim is to gradually reduce the average age from 36.4 today to 33 in 2015. To do so, part of a special temporary budget, called "*enveloppe de rajeunissement*" (around 25 million Euro per year during 4 years, or 100 million Euro in total),<sup>18</sup> has been set aside and will fund three specific measures: 1) a separation bonus, 2) external mobility to other federal departments with an incentive bonus and a partial, 5 years maximum complement to their new salary, and 3) the creation of an external outplacement bureau for helping people to make the transition to the civilian labour market.

## 4.2 MANPOWER COSTS



As a consequence of the professionalization of the Belgian armed forces, the share of manpower expenditures within the defence budget has significantly increased, from less than 50% in 1981, when the draft still existed, to 58.2% in 1997 (figure 2). It should be noted, however, that the relative increase of manpower costs within the defence budget began before the 1992 decision to suspend the draft and that, since the 1950s, manpower costs have always been higher in Belgium than in other Western countries.<sup>19</sup> If it did not begin in 1992, the growth of manpower costs within the defence budget has nevertheless accelerated with the decision to end the draft in 1992 to reach a peak in 1994 (60.1%) when the Belgian armed forces became fully professionalized.

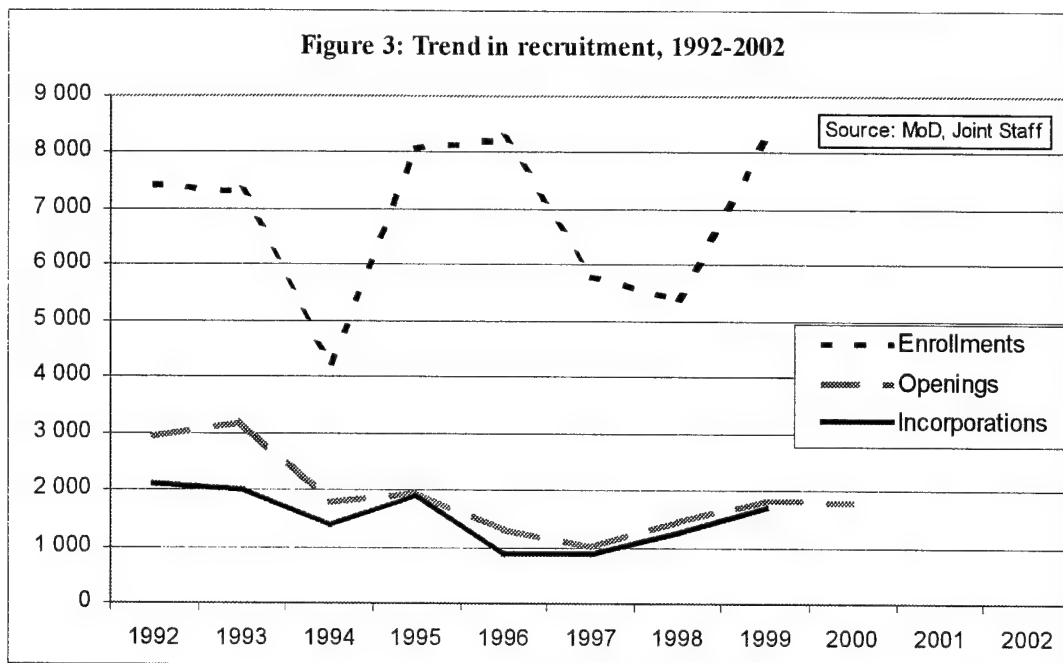
The aim of the Strategic Plan 2000-2015 is, through a younger and leaner force, to reduce personnel costs from 58 % now to 50 % in 2015 in order to increase equipment costs to 25 % (against 17 % in 1997) and to arrive to a more balanced manpower-operations and maintenance-procurement budget of 50-25-25.<sup>20</sup>

## 4.3 RECRUITING SHORTFALLS.

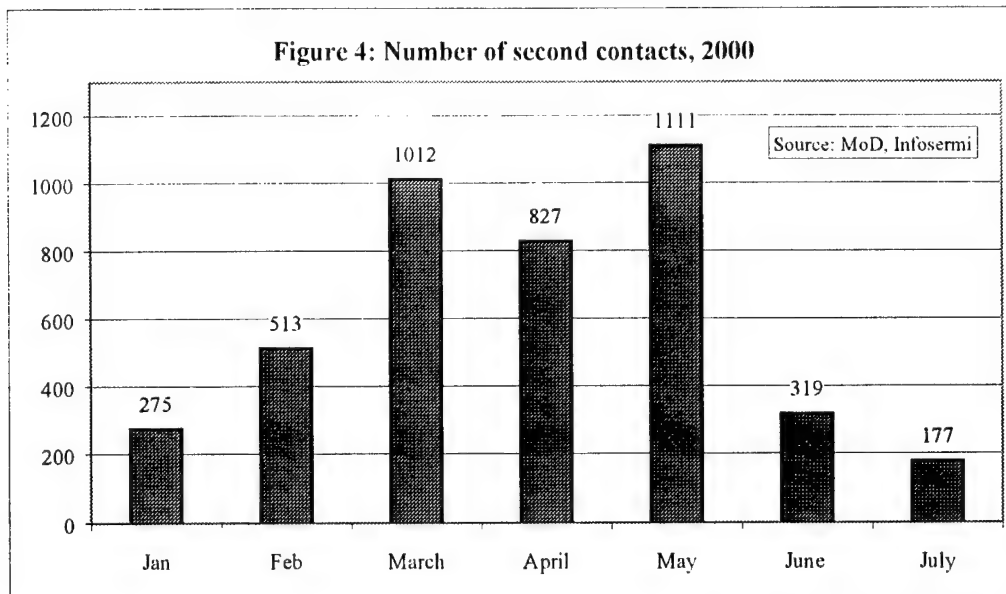
Recruiting shortfalls experienced by the Belgian military seem to be the result of five main structural factors: the complexity and length of the present selection and recruitment process, non competitive pay levels, linguistic imbalances, an image problem, and the unattractiveness of short-term contracts.



#### 4.3.1 RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS



As mentioned before, between 1992 and 1998, because of the significant downsizing of the Belgian armed forces and the resulting manpower surplus, especially at the NCOs level, a quasi recruitment stop had been put into place. There was therefore no big recruitment problems during this transitory period, although as figure 3 indicates, even then the military did not succeed to fill all its openings. Beginning in 1999, however, the Belgian military began again to recruit personnel more aggressively in all rank categories and, although the numbers were still quite modest, it began to experience more serious recruitment difficulties, especially at the enlisted level. That year, despite a costly advertising campaign, the military could only fill 93 % of its 1,846 openings.<sup>21</sup>



Between March and June 2000, Infosermi, the information and recruitment centre of the Belgian armed forces, launched its second advertising campaign at a cost of 1.24 million Euro. However, although, as figure 4 shows, the campaign initially succeeded in attracting significantly more young people to the recruitment centres than in the months preceding and following the campaign, it failed to reach recruiting goals.

To the extent that recruitment needs will significantly increase after the transitory period,<sup>22</sup> it means that the military is and will be confronted with a serious recruitment problem. The reason is simple: with a booming economy overflowing with job opportunities (the jobless rate among young people is fast decreasing, especially in Flanders),<sup>23</sup> the job market is becoming ever more competitive<sup>24</sup> and in this market the military faces a number of structural problems.

One of these problems is internal, i.e. the length and complexity of the recruitment process. The time between the first visit to a recruitment centre and the actual enlistment in a unit varies between a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 1 year. The consequence is that between the time young interested people visit a recruitment centre and the moment they are actually enlisted, a majority has found a job in the civilian sector. According to Infosermi,<sup>25</sup> out of four young people entering (or phoning) a recruitment centre and expressing an interest in a military career, only one fills an enrolment form. Out of 100 enrolled people, about one-third do not show up at the Selection and Recruitment Centre. (CRS) The two main reasons are 1) the too long delay between enrolment and the moment they are called at the CRS and 2) the fact that they have changed their mind in the meantime. Out of the remaining two-third, one-third fail the psychotechnic tests (very few fail the physical tests).<sup>26</sup> In other words, between the first contact and the actual enlistment, only one out of 40 interested people are recruited. And the story is not yet finished: depending on the service branch, between 30 % and 50 % of those recruited are discharged from recruit training either because they want to quit or fail the course.

In order to minimise this initial huge attrition problem,<sup>27</sup> the Strategic Plan 2000-2015 calls for a drastic simplification and shortening of the whole recruitment process. The

goal is to arrive to a "one day, one week, one month" accession system,<sup>28</sup> i.e. a process where an applicant would be called at the CRS one week after his one-day enrolment at an Infofermi bureau. At the CRS, all selection tests should be completed in one day (instead of three now) and one month after his initial enrolment the applicant should join his unit. This new system should be introduced in 2002 after Parliament's approval.

#### 4.3.2 PAY LEVELS.

Another structural competitive disadvantage the Belgian military faces compared to the civilian sector, and in particular with the civil service, is pay and compensation level. Military pay is seen as less and less attractive, especially at the enlisted level,<sup>29</sup> and the recent "Octopus agreement" between government and police unions on the reform of the police services, a direct competitor of the military on the labour market, which led to a very significant pay hike for police personnel, has only worsened the situation.<sup>30</sup> Other competitors on the low-skilled job market (people without any degree to junior high school) are the postal service and railway company. All offer better pay than the military and a less dangerous and stressful job.

Again, in order to address this problem, the Strategic Plan 2000-2015 calls for an overall pay increase, especially in job categories where the shortfalls are the most serious (technical specialists, pilots, computer specialists, medical personnel)(see below section 5.1.2). The Minister, however, admits that aligning military pay on the civil service would cost 74.368 million Euro and on the new federal police 198.315 million Euro, which is not politically feasible.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.3.3 LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATIVENESS

Another problematic aspect of the recruitment of volunteers is the serious linguistic imbalance. For years indeed, the recruitment of Dutch-speaking recruits has been insufficient and their retention rate lower. According to the Head of Infofermi, there are too many applicants for too few functions in Wallonia: 20 for one job, while it is the opposite in Flanders: 3 applicants for one job. Among the 6,000 applicants in 1999, 55 % were French-speaking while only 30 % of the functions were opened to French-speaking candidates. On July 17, 2000, 2,690 French-speaking applicants were registered for only 1,984 on the Dutch-speaking side. In other words, the imbalance is growing worse (58 % versus 42 %). For the moment, Dutch-speaking personnel represents 55 % of the Belgian armed forces while the proportion should be 60 % Dutch-speaking/40 % French-speaking. The underrepresentation of Dutch-speaking personnel is the most serious among enlisted personnel (51 % versus 49 %). Among officers, the proportion is right (61 % versus 39 %).<sup>32</sup>

This linguistic imbalance is due, on the one hand, to the higher unemployment rate in Wallonia, the French-speaking region, while the Flemish economy is booming and the unemployment rate very low and by a traditionally greater attractiveness for a military career and a better image of the armed forces in the southern part of Belgium on the other hand.<sup>33</sup> Surveys also systematically show that Dutch-speaking young people (partially perhaps because they have more choice) are significantly more numerous than French-speaking ones to want a secure job (long-term contract) with regular hours, not far from their home.<sup>34</sup> To the extent that, in Flanders, the main military base, an infantry brigade, is situated in Limburg, a province on the East near

the Dutch border, this is a supplementary obstacle to the recruitment of Dutch-speaking volunteers.

So, in order to redress this linguistic imbalance, the recruitment campaigns of the last two years were essentially directed towards young Dutch-speaking males and females (but without much success as just seen) and the number of openings is greater for Dutch-speaking candidates (from 61 % in 1997 to 64 % in 1998 and 1999).<sup>35</sup>

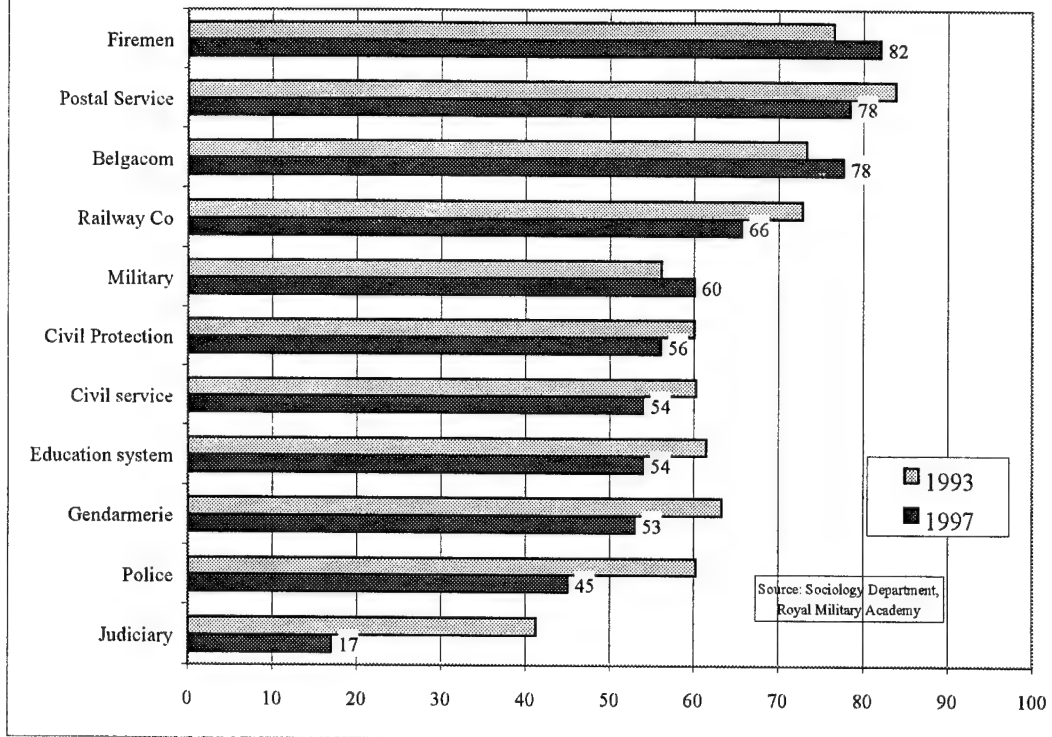
Faced with this chronic shortage of Dutch-speaking candidates and therefore with a number of unfilled slots overall, the Defence Minister has recently alluded to the possibility of ending the linguistic quotas and of substituting French-speaking recruits for Dutch-speaking ones, thus in effect making the Belgian armed forces more French-speaking.<sup>36</sup> For the moment, however, it is difficult to imagine that a dominantly French-speaking military would be viable on a long-term basis, even if, from a short-term perspective, it would help solving part of the recruitment problems facing the Belgian armed forces. If indeed, in most western countries, statistical representativeness has become a less important legitimacy criteria for military organisations,<sup>37</sup> in Belgium, at least as far as the linguistic issue is concerned, it is still an fundamental variable. The bold proposal of the Defence minister, however, has the merit of openly addressing a Belgian taboo maybe no longer in line with a diverse post-modern society.

#### **4.3.4 IMAGE AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE BELGIAN ARMED FORCES**

But perhaps the most serious problem facing the Belgian armed forces, from a long-term perspective at least, is their fuzzy and not so good image and the relative lack of attractiveness of a military career, especially in Flanders as seen above. Compared to its most direct competitors on the labour market, the image of the Belgian military is not good enough. For too many people, especially young people and many civilian employers, the military is still a place for people who cannot find a job elsewhere or are too lazy. Compared to a few years ago, however, it seems that the image of the Belgian military, thanks in large parts to the multiplication of new peace-keeping missions, has improved, if not in absolute terms, at least in relative one.

As figure 5 shows,<sup>38</sup> in 1997, six young Belgians out of ten had a rather good opinion of their armed forces, a little more than in 1993 (56 %). This placed the military in fifth place in the ranking of the 11 selected institutions, a much better score than in 1993 (when the military came in penultimate position, just before the Judiciary). However, this better ranking was not due to an improvement of the military per se but rather to the fact that the image of some other institutions (the police and Gendarmerie especially) got worse, as a result of the 1996 "Dutroux scandal".<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the image of the armed forces remained fuzzy among more than one fourth of the respondents,<sup>40</sup> a far higher percentage than for the other institutions.

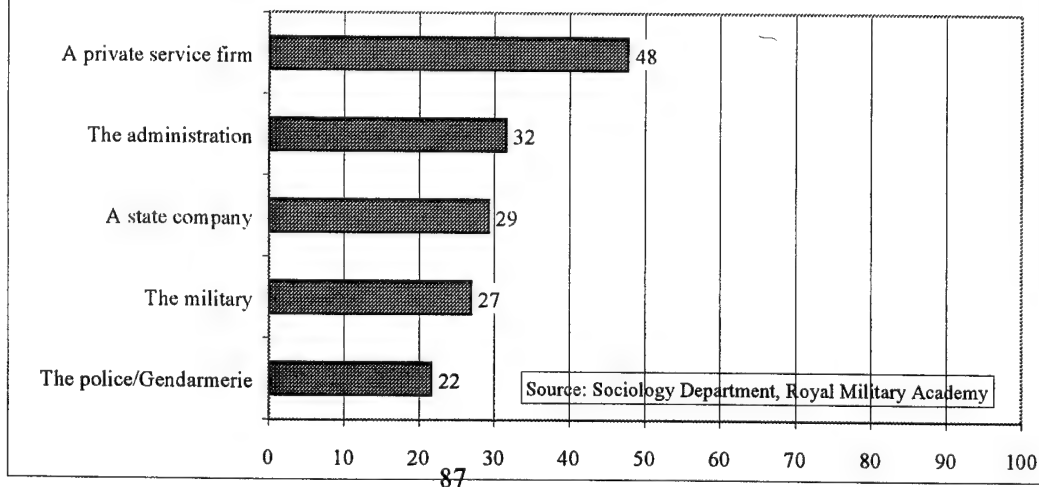
**Figure 5: Opinions on 11 Belgian institutions, 1993-1997**  
(% "rather good opinions")



In 1997, 37 % of the young respondents said they had a better opinion of the Belgian armed forces since they participate in peacekeeping operations abroad versus 55 % in 1993. This lower percentage can be the result of a certain routinization of these missions. In reference to the preceding section, it should be added that French-speaking respondents were significantly more numerous than Dutch-speaking ones to say they had a better opinion of the armed forces since they participate in peacekeeping operations.

This not so excellent image of the Belgian armed forces is, in turn, correlated with a rather low degree of attractiveness for a military career. Figure 6 shows the

**Figure 6: % of 15-17 years old Belgians interested in a job in (1997)**



percentage of young Belgians aged 15-17 who would be interested in a job in five different types of organisations. As one can see, in 1997, only 27 % of the respondents said they would be interested in a military career. Among the five types of organisations, only the Gendarmerie/Police did worse than the military with 22 %, again the result of the "Dutroux affair". The most attractive career choice was a job in the service sector (48 %), followed by the administration (32 %). Those who had a positive opinion of the military were significantly more likely to be interested by a military career (33 % versus 10 %). The military tended to attract people who would like to have a rather physical and technical kind of job and to work outside.<sup>41</sup>

As discussed in section 5.1.2, specific measures aimed at improving the attractiveness of a military career have been proposed in the Strategic Plan 2000-2015.

#### **4.3.5 INADEQUACY BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND WHAT THE MILITARY OFFERS**

As just seen, the image of the Belgian military, certainly compared to its direct competitors is not optimal. More serious, however, is that relative to these civilian competitors, the military is confronted with two specific problems which complicate the recruitment function.

The first challenge is the increasing number of international operations abroad: the likelihood to be sent abroad for all military personnel is far higher than during the Cold War and not all young people are attracted by such a perspective. While it is true that peacekeeping operations have had a rather positive influence on the image of the Belgian armed forces, it is also true that, as far as recruitment is concerned, constabulary missions, because of the higher risks to life involved, can act as a deterrent for many young people.<sup>42</sup> According to a 1993 survey among young Belgians, 47 % of those who were not interested in a job in the military said it was because they did not want to be sent abroad.<sup>43</sup>

Second, as mentioned before, the military, because of its missions, must remain a young organisation. It needs a constant inflow of short-or medium-term volunteers. This means that the military cannot guarantee to all its personnel lifelong contracts. This is a very serious problem in Belgium if one knows that the overwhelming majority of the population (more than in most other western countries) values, first of all, job security. For instance, always according to the 1993 survey, 93% of young respondents said they thought it rather important to have a secure job.<sup>44</sup> Hence the relative inadequacy between what the military had to offer (i.e. short-term contracts), especially at the enlisted level where the recruitment problems are the most acute, and job expectations of prospective recruits.

### **5 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION POLICY 2000-2015<sup>45</sup>**

#### **5.1.1 MANPOWER STRENGTH**

At the present time, only 46 % of military personnel are working in operational ("teeth") functions versus 54 % in support ("tail") functions. The Strategic Plan 2000-2015 wants to reverse this proportion by rationalising and restructuring the various staffs and support branches (administrative and logistics services, schools) and reducing the number of people working there. The new downsizing will be linear and without forced lay-offs. The aim is to go from the present maximum allowed strength of 47,350 - and the actual 44,500 people - to a force of 39,500 on January 1, 2015. During this transition period, the gradual manpower reduction should be realised

through a series of accompanying outplacement measures (within the Department or outside) and a limitation on new recruitments to around 2,000 per year. New recruits will be assigned in priority to operational units and older personnel will be transferred to support services. After the transition, i.e. from 2015 onwards, recruitment will increase. In order to attract enough volunteers, the following measures aimed at increasing the attractiveness of a military career will be implemented.

#### **5.1.2 MEASURES AIMED AT IMPROVING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF A MILITARY CAREER**

As discussed above, the short-term contracts foreseen in the original 1992 reform plan have failed to attract enough volunteers.<sup>46</sup> So, the Strategic Plan 2000-2015 calls for the development of a new type of contract, the "Military-Civilian-Ex-Military" project (MCEM). From a recruitment perspective, this new contract is the cornerstone of the Strategic Plan. Under this concept, all personnel (with the exception of a few specialists) would be recruited for an initial term taking them to about age 40 (which corresponds to the age limit for operational functions). Once the age 40 reached, only a limited number of people (based on their formation and specialities) would be allowed to continue a military career at the top of their grade levels while another group would be transferred laterally to other – civilian – jobs within the Defence Department or to other federal agencies. The others would have to return, through outplacement structures,<sup>47</sup> on the civilian job market. Such a system would allow a younger military personnel structure and the recruitment of more young people. Compared with the present 5-year short-term contracts, the advantage of the new system is that it would require less yearly recruitments. To the extent that this new contract falls short of a "career" contract, however, it remains to be seen whether it will be more successful than the 1974 5 to 10 years contract (which was also a failure) in attracting enough qualified volunteers. All will depend on the success of lateral transfers and outplacement guidance (already the weak points in the preceding reforms).<sup>48</sup> For the implementation phase of this new contract form, a special 4-year budget of 40 million Euro (or 10 million Euro per year) is foreseen in order to offer a separation bonus of 14,874 Euro to approximately 2,200 military personnel.

The Strategic Plan 2000-2015 also calls for an overall pay increase in order to make a military career more competitive on the labour market and for targeted pay increases for certain job specialities, such as pilots, computer specialists, some medical and para-medical functions where there is either a recruiting shortfall or a low retention rate. A special yearly budget of 14,874 million Euro has been set aside in the plan for the financing of these measures.

An additional measure under study at the Ministry of Defence is the creation of a special insurance for professional risks (sickness, injury, death) for military personnel in operations abroad financed by the department.<sup>49</sup>

#### **5.1.3 THE RECRUITMENT OF CIVILIAN PERSONNEL**

Although the original professionalization plan of 1992 had planned to give a more important role to civilians within the department and to outsource certain functions to civilian firms, in order to free military personnel from non operational roles, the recruitment of civilians has been lagging. While in the 1992 reform plan, 5,000 civilians were foreseen, as of May 1, 1999, there were only 2,730 civilians: 2,021 career and 709 contractuels.<sup>50</sup> Not only is a more flexible recruitment procedure needed but, more importantly, a strategic review of the division of labour between civilian and military personnel seems absolutely necessary. Civilians should, more than now, occupy key management functions requiring continuity and technical

expertise. One of the problems with military personnel is indeed its rapid turnover: officers rotate functions, on the average, every three years.

Some non core tasks have already been successfully outsourced to civilian firms. Such is the case, for example, since 1996, with the cleaning and maintenance of military barracks. But, in other domains, there has been a return to the ex-ante situation: after having been outsourced for a while, an internal military audit recommended that, for budgetary and qualitative reasons, catering be again managed by military personnel.<sup>51</sup> This notwithstanding, it is obvious that more non core functions could and should be civilianised or outsourced, especially because, as seen, it is so difficult to recruit qualified military personnel.

The Strategic Plan 2000-2015 seems to be going in this direction. It calls for the recruitment of more civilians in support and administrative functions so as to free military personnel for operational (core) functions. The plan also calls for a breaking down of horizontal boundaries and a better integration of civilian personnel to the structures of the armed forces.<sup>52</sup>

## **6 FURTHER ADAPTING THE BELGIAN ARMED FORCES TO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

In this section, I propose some further measures that the Belgian armed forces should implement (and are already implementing in some cases) in order to solve their recruitment problems and, more broadly, become a truly post-modern military organisation. The key word here is opening. The military must open itself more than before to the outside world and stop to be "*La Grande Murette*".

### **6.1 COMMUNICATION POLICY.**

Because, as seen in section 4.3.4, the image of the Belgian military is too fuzzy, efforts should be made, and are indeed already made, to develop a more pro-active integrated communication policy and a better positioning strategy. A better positioning strategy implies explaining what are the Belgian armed forces today (a professional organisation), what they do (peacekeeping operations, humanitarian missions, but also help to the nation in case of natural disasters, etc.),<sup>53</sup> how they function (the various forces, the diversity of jobs) and what kind of job opportunities they offer.

To market itself is something new for the Belgian military. Communication, however, has become a necessary tool for every organisation. It is one of the key to survival in an ever more competitive world. Furthermore, it is from the nation, the citizens, that the military takes its legitimacy. The military needs the support of the citizens to survive. It must therefore explain to them what the armed forces do. It is vital that the military opens up. It is only then that it will find its *niche* on the labour market.<sup>54</sup>

But building a new, more modern communication policy will not be enough. The opening must also and foremost be structural and cultural.

### **6.2 STRUCTURES.**

The military organisations of the future will have to be more decentralised and more flexible, less bureaucratic also with a flatter hierarchical structure and more flexible



communication networks. In this context, at a time of "lean and mean", *delayed* organisations, one should ask the question whether there are not too many hierarchical levels in the Belgian armed forces and whether the various staffs are not too big. The overall trend in modern, efficient organisations is to empower employees, to push responsibilities down the hierarchical structures, to junior officers and NCOs in particular. As seen in section 5.1.1, the Strategic Plan 2000-2015 seems to be one foot in the right direction. The General Staff has been asked by the Minister of Defence to develop for the end of this year a detailed proposal for the implementation of a joint, inter-service integrated structure.

With the end of the draft, a more flexible, diversified, employee-friendly human resource management is also needed. Among the measures going in this direction, one can cite the introduction of new working conditions, such as part-time and flex time, and a more efficient outplacement policy for non career volunteers.<sup>55</sup> The latter measure seems particularly important in the light of the experiences of other post-modern armed forces. In the United States and in Great Britain, for example, the military can more easily recruit short-term volunteers because, after their enlistment, these persons are quite highly valued in the civilian sector, while in Belgium, they are still too much regarded as lazy and have thus great difficulties to find civilian jobs after their enlistment, which in turn functions as a deterrent for the recruitment of short-term volunteers. The Dutch armed forces, faced with the same recruitment problems as the Belgian military, is now offering short-term volunteers in non transferable combat jobs, the opportunity to receive a civilian vocational training, so that they do not leave the military empty handed.<sup>56</sup>

Other measures aimed at making the management of human resources more modern and flexible could be:

- an increased use of reservists for some support functions during operations abroad, what would make it possible to recruit more motivated persons for these kinds of missions
- a greater use of outsourcing for non central/peripheral functions
- a more pro-active recruitment policy toward women and ethnic minorities which are still largely underrepresented in the armed forces,<sup>57</sup> or even, as the Defence Minister recently proposed, substituting non Belgian citizens for Belgians.<sup>58</sup>
- better taking into account new demographic realities, namely the ageing of the population (therefore the possibility of recruiting older age groups than the actual 18-25 years old),<sup>59</sup> the fact that in post-modern all-volunteer forces, the majority of the personnel is married with children,<sup>60</sup> but also the increase of the number of monoparental families (therefore, for example, the need to organise child-care centres in the main military bases)<sup>61</sup>
- social and psychological support to families and personnel during long term operations abroad.<sup>62</sup>

### 6.3 CULTURE.

Efficient post-modern military organisations must develop a new organisational culture more directed toward empowerment, encouragement of initiative, teamwork and the satisfaction of personal needs, as well as toward such values as tolerance, respect of others, and in particular of minorities, inside as well as outside.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Belgium was the first country on the European continent to abolish conscription. On July 3, 1992, the Belgian government decided to implement the most radical restructuring of the Belgian armed forces of the post-war period. The plan called for the suspension of the draft as early as 1994, the professionalization of the forces, slashing by half personnel strength and freezing the Defence budget. Although not yet finished, the restructuring process is clearly leading the Belgian military towards the post-modern model.

Although in a first phase, given the significant downsizing of its career component, the Belgian armed forces did not experience recruitment problems (because there were no recruitments at all), after the transition, the Belgian military, as other Western military organisations, will experience (and is already experiencing) increasing difficulties finding qualified personnel on the labour market. Although pay increases are not unimportant in this respect, they will not suffice to attract enough qualified young people. More structural and cultural measures are needed. As Soeters rightly points out,<sup>63</sup> there should be no taboos here unduly constraining the range of remedies. In opening the debate on doing away with old-fashioned linguistic quotas and on recruiting non national residents in the Belgian armed forces, the Defence Minister certainly seems to think so.

Finally, on a more structural level, the development of a true common European defense – and eventually armed forces – is the key factor allowing for an efficient restructuring today and in the future. In other words, this restructuring process must go hand in hand, if these organizations want to be more efficient, with a greater integration and cooperation of armed forces at the European level. Only greater integration and cooperation will make possible a greater degree of task specialization among European armed forces and therefore allow to solve the present personnel problems given the present and future budgetary constraints facing all European governments.<sup>64</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 It should be pointed out that, as in The Netherlands and contrary to the United States for example, the draft has not been ended, but only suspended. In other words, it still legally exist (but is not applied any more) and can be - theoretically - reinstated at any time, the legislation still being in place. See Jan Van der Meulen and Philippe Manigart, "Zero Draft in the Low Countries: The Final Shift to the All-Volunteer Force", *Armed Forces and Society* 24, 2 (Winter 1997): 315-35.
- 2 Source: Joint Staff, *Restructuration des Forces Armées Belges: Etude de l'Etat-Major Général*. November 1992, p. 3.
- 3 Source: *La Défense nationale en chiffres '98*. Brussels: National Defence Information Service, 1998, p. 5.
- 4 Sources: Jean-Pol Poncelet, "Managing Strategic Change: Reforming the Belgian Armed Forces", paper delivered at the Senior Executive Course 98-2, George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies. Garmisch, 27 May 1998 and MoD.

- 5 See the final parliamentary report, *Débat national: rapport fait au nom de la Commission de la Défense nationale par Jan Van Erps and J.P. Moerman*. Brussels: Chambre des représentants de Belgique, 1999.
- 6 Source: A. Flahaut. *Le plan stratégique pour la modernisation de l'Armée belge 2000-2015: Propositions concrètes pour entrer dans le 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle*. Brussels: MoD.
- 7 Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, 25.
- 8 Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, 33-37.
- 9 Sources: Flahaut, *Plan stratégique* and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 24, 2000, p. 4.
- 10 Source: *Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 24, 2000, p. 4.
- 11 See Philippe Manigart, *Les forces armées belges en transition : une analyse sociologique* (Brussels : Editions de l'Institut de Sociologie, 1985).
- 12 Source: Joint Staff, *Restructuration des Forces Armées Belges*.
- 13 Manigart, *Les forces armées belges en transition*.
- 14 See Philippe Manigart and David Prensky, "Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers: Problems in the Belgian Armed Forces." *Armed Forces and Society* 9, 1, pp. 98-114 (Fall 1982). Philippe Manigart, Nicole Wauters and Patrick-Alain Charrault, *Etude de marché sur le recrutement de personnel volontaire et de carrière dans les Forces armées belges* (Brussels: Royal Military Academy, Department of Social Sciences, technical report SS23, 1994) and Philippe Manigart, *L'image des Forces Armées belges auprès des jeunes de 15 à 18 ans en 1997* (Brussels: Royal Military Academy, Department of Social Sciences, technical report SS28, 1998).
- 15 Sources: Poncelet, "Managing Strategic Change" and MoD.
- 16 Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, 67.
- 17 Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, chapter 4.
- 18 Out of a total special budget of 139 million Euro.
- 19 Philippe Manigart, "L'évolution des dépenses militaires en Belgique depuis 1900," *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, n° 1009 (1983).
- 20 According to the official budgetary projections, manpower costs linked to pay should decrease from 55.8 billion BEF now to 46.8 billion BEF in 2015. Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, 64 and 78.
- 21 The percentages for officers were 97.5 % (251 accessions out of 245 openings), for NCOs, 97.5 % (239 out of 245) and enlisted personnel, 96.8 % (1225 out of 1265). Source: Belgian Senate, *Questions and Réponses*, 1999-2000 (June 6, 2000, pp 774-777). Question n° 591 of M. Kelchtermans from April 13, 2000.
- 22 Until 2015, recruitments will be limited to around 2,000 people a year. In cruise regime, i.e. after 2015, this number will be slightly increased to between 2,400-2,500, i.e. the yearly maximum recruitment potential, according to a labour market research. Source: Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, 64.

- 23 In June 2000, the official jobless rate in Belgium was 10.1 % (8.7 % among men and 14.4 % among women) In Flanders, however, it was only 6 % versus 15.6 % in Wallonia and 16.5 % in Brussels. Source: Ministry for Labour and Employment, National Employment Office.
- 24 For instance, a study on the effect of the economic situation on the number of applicants at the Royal Military Academy between 1950 and 1985 showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between jobless rate and the number of applicants during the period studied: the higher the jobless rate, the more candidates there were. See Christiaan Van Hove, *De invloed van de economische conjunctuur op het aantal kandidaten voor de Koninklijke Militaire School* (Brussels: Royal Military Academy, Department of Social Sciences, B.A. paper, 1988).
- 25 Personal interview with major Dekeyzer, head of Infofermi, July 14, 2000.
- 26 Notwithstanding the relatively low failure rate, a relaxation of medical standards for enlistment which are outdated (as for example, disqualification for being flat-footed) is also under study. Source: *La Meuse* (7/9/2000, 7).
- 27 In 1999, 45,000 young people asked Infofermi information on military careers. Source: *De Morgen*, July 29, 2000.
- 28 Source: *Le Soir*, August 5, 2000.
- 29 For instance the net pay for a 25 years old married corporal with two children is 50,972 BEF. At this end of his career (at 56), he will earn 55,127 BEF as first corporal in chief. Source: MoD.
- 30 For instance, according to the CGSP, the socialist military union, a 32 year old corporal in chief earns 44,437 BEF (net) while a policeman of the same rank earns 55,908 BEF: for a 50 year old adjudant in chief, the net pay is 64,986 BEF against 82,445 BEF for his colleague in the new federal police. Source: *La Libre Belgique*, November 20, 2000.
- 31 Source: *La Libre Belgique*, November 20, 2000.
- 32 Source: *Le Soir*, August 5, 2000.
- 33 See Manigart, *Les forces armées belges en transition*, Philippe Manigart, "Managing diversity: women and ethnic minorities in the Belgian Armed Forces", in *Managing Diversity in the Armed Forces: Experiences from Nine Countries*, ed. Joseph Soeters and Jan van der Meulen (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 1999), 105-126 and Manigart et al., *Etude de marché sur le recrutement*.
- 34 Manigart, *L'image des Forces Armées belges auprès des jeunes de 15 à 18 ans en 1997* et Manigart et al, *Etude de marché sur le recrutement*.
- 35 Source: *Le Soir*, August 5, 2000.
- 36 Source: *Gazet van Antwerpen*, October 31, 2000.
- 37 See Bernard Boëne, "A tribe among tribes...Post-modern militaries and civil-military relations ?", paper presented at the Interim Meeting of the International Sociological

Association's Research Committee 01 (Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution),  
Modena, Italy, 20-22 January 1997, 4.

- 38 The data for this figure come from two surveys carried out by INRA-Belgium for the Sociology Department of the Royal Military Academy in 1993 and 1997 among representative samples of 588 and 300 young Belgians aged 15-18 years old. See Manigart, *L'image des Forces Armées belges auprès des jeunes de 15 à 18 ans en 1997* for more details.
- 39 This scandal erupted in Belgium following the kidnapping and murder of four young girls. It revealed serious dysfunctions in the police and justice system.
- 40 23 % of respondents had no opinion concerning the Belgian armed forces compared to only 9 % for the Postal service or 10 % for the Police (Manigart, *L'image des Forces Armées*, 8).
- 41 See Manigart, *L'image des Forces Armées* for more details.
- 42 On the relationship between new missions and recruitment for the Belgian armed forces, see Carl Decraene, *Invloed van de nieuwe opdrachten van het Belgisch leger op de rekrutering van het Belgisch leger* (Brussels: Royal Military Academy, Department of Social Sciences, B.A. paper, 1999).
- 43 See Philippe Manigart and Eric Marlier, "New Roles and Missions, Army Image and Recruitment Prospects: The Case of Belgium" in *Future Roles, Missions and Structures of Armed Forces in the New World Order: The Public View*, ed. Philippe Manigart (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), 7-26.
- 44 As it appears from a 1998 survey, among Belgian military personnel, the two most important reasons for enlistment were a regular pay and a secure job. The lower the rank, the more highly valued were these two reasons. Among officers, the most often cited reason was to exercise responsibilities. See Nicole Wauters, *La satisfaction au travail des militaires belges* (Brussels: Joint Staff, Personnel Directorate, 1999), 9.
- 45 Flahaut, *Plan stratégique*, chapter V.
- 46 For example, in 1999, only 19 % of the openings for short-term contracts were filled (or 14 out of 73). Source: Belgian Senate, *Questions and Réponses, 1999-2000* (June 6, 2000, pp 774-777).
- 47 In order to facilitate the re-entry on the civilian job market, volunteers would receive, during the last three years of their 10-year contract, a special civilian job training packages (as, for instance, truck drivers licenses. Source: *La Meuse* (7/9/2000, 7).
- 48 In an interview in the daily *De Standaard* (5/9/2000, 4), the Defence Minister has revealed that he had begun, for example, negotiations over outplacement possibilities with professional associations in the sector of security firms and money transport.
- 49 Source: *La Meuse* (7/9/2000, 7).
- 50 Jean-Pol Poncelet, "Dune legislature à l'autre: septembre 1995-juin 1998." MoD: Press briefing, June 1999, p. 11
- 51 *ibid.*

- 52 Flahaut. Le plan stratégique. 61.
- 53 According to a survey done among a representative sample of the Belgian population in January 1993, help to the nation was the mission most cited by the respondents (90 %). See Philippe Manigart, *Enquête sur l'image de l'Armée belge* (Brussels: Royal Military Academy. Department of Social Sciences. technical report SS20, 1993).
- 54 It is interesting to note, in this respect, that faced with an increasing difficulty of attracting a sufficient number of high school graduates, the Belgian Royal Military Academy has decided to asked a private consultant bureau to develop a integrated corporate communication plan aimed at better targeting and reaching the various potential youth segments of the population. This academic year, of the 196 openings at the Academy, only 193 were filled (out of 841 who took part to the entrance exams)(Source: RMA).
- 55 The positive influence of the availability of reinsertion packages (vocational training and bonus) on the propensity to enlist was clearly demonstrated in the 1994 market research on the recruitment of volunteers for the Belgian armed forces. See Manigart et al, *Etude de marché*. 68).
- 56 Source: De Volkskrant, 31 July, 1999.
- 57 Women make up around 7.5 % of the Belgian armed forces. This percentage is, however, far higher at the Royal Military Academy. The last three years, the percentage of entering female cadets has turned around 20 % and this year is 17 %. No data are available on the percentage of minorities. For more details, see Philippe Manigart, "Managing diversity".
- 58 The Belgian Defence Minister made this proposal in an interview to *La Dernière Heure* of October 30, 2000. In that interview, the Minister aired the idea, in the future, of recruiting EU and even non-EU citizens living in Belgium in the Belgian armed forces. According to him, the recruitment of EU citizens would prefigure a future European army while recruiting non-EU citizens living in Belgium would be a mean to integrate them in the society. It is also interesting to know that, under an exchange contract between the RAF and the Belgian Air Force, since mid-1999, three British RAF pilots are working under contract for the Belgian Air Force at the 15 Wing (C-130). Belgium, in turn, has leased two board mechanics (NCOs) to the British air force. This exchange is seen as beneficial on both sides to the extent that Belgium has not enough pilots and the RAF has a shortage of mechanics. See *La Meuse*, October 30, 2000.
- 59 In the same interview in *La Dernière Heure*, the Defence Minister alluded to such a possibility. He proposes to extend the age limit of 25 for a first enlistment.
- 60 According to a 1998 survey, 65 % of Belgian military personnel were married, 23 % single and 12 % divorced. 77 % lived together, 14 % alone. On average, they had 1.2 children. 68 % of the spouses were in paid-employment. Source: Wauters, *La satisfaction au travail*. 8.
- 61 The Defence Minister has announced his intention to open child-care centres at the two main bases of the Army, i.e. Leopoldsburg and Marche-en-Famenne (1st and 7th Mechanised Brigades) and at other important bases, such as the main Navy base in Zeebrugge. From a 1999 survey of female personnel of the Belgian armed forces, it appears that 76 % of the respondents thought that it would be useful to organise child-

care centres in the main military bases. Among respondents who had children and those who had children under 6, the percentages were 81 % and 90 % respectively. Source: Nicole Wauters, *Les femmes dans les Forces armées belges: 25 ans de présence* (Brussels: Joint Staff, Personnel Directorate, 2000).

- 62 On the need and demand for such support, see Nicole Wauters. *Le soutien psychosocial des militaires et de leurs proches pendant les missions de longue durée à l'étranger: étude quantitative* (Brussels: Joint Staff, Personnel Directorate, 1997).
- 63 See chapter in this report
- 64 On this, see chapter by Keith Hartley.





## THE NETHERLANDS: SMART RECRUITMENT AND BEYOND

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## 1. Introduction: debating missions, reinventing personnel

In the autumn of 1999, the Dutch government came forward with the *Defense White Paper 2000*. This document addresses the big issues of the coming decade, at the crossover of international security, defense-policy and military organization. The White Paper signals a next phase in the restructuring of the armed forces, which began almost directly after the end of the Cold War. The immediate motive for drawing up a new masterplan was rather mundane: yet another round of budgetcutting as agreed upon by the second 'purple' government, which was formed after the general elections of 1998. (Since 1994 the Netherlands have been governed by a 'purple' coalition of rightist liberals and leftist social-democrats, something unique in Dutch history)

Besides this financial motive however, there were more fundamental reasons to evaluate a decade of change and to draw conclusions with an eye to the future. First of all the principle question as to what nowadays military efforts pertain, now that the classical task ('national defense') has receded into the background, has not been really answered once and for all. Dilemmas with respect to 'new missions', are high on the public and political agenda and have become the subject of a continuous debate. Five years after the event, 'Srebrenica' is still being dealt with by the media almost on a daily basis. Officially appointed committees, parliamentary ones among them, have been holding hearings and have published reports about a number of the issues involved. An all-encompassing scientific study on the fall of this 'safe area' and the role of the Dutch blue helmets, will be published in 2001. Of course the critical self-evaluation by the United Nations with respect to the doomed mission of UNPROFOR, has not gone unnoticed.

The intervention of NATO on behalf of the Albanian majority in Kosovo, in the spring of 1999, has only deepened the debate about contemporary military missions. To be sure, the Netherlands proved themselves a trustworthy ally and from start to finish operations against Serbian targets were endorsed by a broad political and public consensus. But there were doubts, especially in hindsight. Pride about the contribution of the Dutch Royal Air Force (which shot down a MIG right at the beginning of the operations), did not take away scepticism about the timing and effectiveness of aerial bombardments to protect human rights. And just how convincing is a humanitarian intervention by countries which are utterly reluctant to risk the lives of their own soldiers?

All these themes and dilemmas reverberate in the *Defense White Paper 2000*, which announces a deeper probing debate about the range and limits of humanitarian intervention. At the same time the White Paper confirms that crisis management and peacekeeping/peace-enforcing constitute one of three main tasks for the Dutch armed forces. The second one being national and allied defense, the third one humanitarian help of all sorts.

In the White Paper a lot of attention is devoted to the organizational reshuffle which is being undertaken almost permanently, not in the least as a consequence of the tri-headed task. All services and units have to be tailored in such a way, that they can be used for classical deployment, for peace-keeping and for humanitarian missions. At the same time other processes of change - technological, managerial - do manifest themselves, partly autonomous, partly intermingled with each other. Purple is not only the colour of the governing coalition, it has also become an important objective in restructuring the armed forces. Army, Air-Force and Navy more and more are

expected to implement jointness. On top of that, jointery at a European level seems to be developing into a goal which is gaining real political and operational relevance.

The details of processes like these are outside the scope of this paper. It is important though to mention them. Not only in order to suggest the image of a changing organization, but also to appreciate the professional challenges for the people who have to make it all happen. Of course in different ways and with different responsibilities, depending on position and function, but nevertheless, every soldier and every civilian within the armed forces, constantly experiences the urge and the pressure of an organization, which is searching, switching and learning.

This also applies to the sphere which is central to this paper: personnel-policies. The latter is extensively dealt with in the *White Paper 2000*. Surely personnel has always been one of the main pre-occupations of Ministers of Defense (or at least of their under-secretaries). But now, probably more than before, it is being realized how crucial people are. A number of developments can be said to give personnel-policies a new kind of urgency. Some of these developments are related to the changes in mission and organization hinted at above. Other ones reflect general societal patterns and processes.

An interesting and important example of the way in which internal and external developments interact, can be seen in the issue of length and frequency of deployments. Because of new missions, a lot of soldiers (though not all of them to the same degree) regularly have to be away from home for up to six months in a row. This causes problems, practical and emotional ones, especially but not only for working parents with (small) children. Such tension may become a decisive factor when considering whether or not to leave the organization - sooner or later most soldiers ask themselves this question. For the military this is an extra reason to develop a new kind of personnel-policies. While doing so, the traditional claim that the armed forces have the need and the right to be different, is used less and less as an excuse to let things stay as they are. Instead, diversity in workpatterns and lifestyles is more and more looked upon as a source from which the organization itself should profit.

Partly interrelated with these developments, there is yet another cluster of variables to which new personnel-policies devote quite some attention. In short: the age profile of the military will be changed in a number of ways. The proportion of lifers to short-timers, now 60% versus 40%, should become the reverse. As a consequence the organization will become quite younger. At the same time, however, the age for retiring will gradually go up to 58. The latter policy fits in with the general development in society, to let people participate on the labour-market till a higher age. More specifically, to stop the tendency to let go of employees more and more long before they have reached the age of 65. In comparison, military personnel still will retire at a relatively early moment. Nonetheless, a major row has broken out between the Under-secretary of Defense and military unions. The latter argue that existing rights are being violated and also that making the organization younger and older at the same time is self-contradictory.

In short, the demographic restructuring of the armed forces is a complex, long-term process and, then, we have not even mentioned one of its pillars: the intake of young people at the basis of the organization. That is a problem in its own right and it is the very topic of this paper. It is important to realize however, that at the background of recruitment, the debate about missions and the reinvention of personnel are very relevant and indeed related.

## 2. Sudden shortage

When the draft formally was ended (1 September 1996), optimism about the prospects for recruiting new professional soldiers prevailed. During the years before-going transitional, a number of units had already gone over to the all-volunteer model, and this very process proved successful. It seemed possible to meet recruitment-targets and not only in a quantitative sense. The quality of the soldiers was reassuring as well. In fact, their educational level was higher than expected. Thus for a short period it looked as if predictions about recruitment for the all-volunteer force were going to be incorrect. Labour-market surveys had suggested that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to interest enough soldiers. Some critics, who choose to remember especially the good things about the draft, added their share of pessimism: the level of the recruits was going to be below standard, and the "scum of the nation" would be among them, not unlike the Colonial Army of the nineteenth century.

Barely three years after the official start of an all-professional military, initial optimism about the recruitment of soldiers has disappeared. The official tone is grave; scepticism has become the norm in public debate and the media has succeeded in adding a touch of scandal by revealing that recruitment figures as published by the Ministry of Defense, bad as they seem to be, are still flattering. Notably, because the degree of premature leaving during basic training, is being camouflaged in the statistics. If the latter factor is taken into consideration in some units the actual personnel-strength may drop to 75% or even less of what it should be.

On the other hand, a bit of scandal is being added by a typical media blow-up of incidents in which soldiers misbehaved. The suspicion that a touch of right wing extremism was involved made things worse. All in all, in a very short time the newborn professional soldier has grown into a problem-child.

With hindsight, it becomes clear that the success of recruitment initially had everything to do with the availability of draft-motivated volunteers. Not until this effect was ebbing away, did armed forces have their real confrontation with the mechanisms and the tides of the labour market. Put otherwise, the real test has just started.

In analyzing the problem a number of other things have to be taken into consideration. First of all, shortages are being felt at different levels in the organization. For instance, it proves to be difficult finding and keeping people for certain specialties which demand a relatively high educational level. Even though the labour-market related causes are partly the same, this particular bottleneck has to be differentiated from recruitment-problems with regard to soldiers. Moreover, the latter shortages especially are being felt in the sphere of combat-functions and part of the logistical functions. Against this background average figures which point out targets and results for the whole military, are not that telling. To get a precise and detailed picture of recruitment and retention, a specification of statistics is adamant.

Whatever the exact figures, the shortage of soldiers (and that is we are talking about in this paper) looks real and serious enough. As a rule, three macro-causes are being pointed out. First, a long-term demographic trend, the well-known development of a grey-headed society, in which the number of young people declines. The diminishing share of the younger cohorts within the total population also affects age-distributions on the labour market. To be sure, this development has been foreseen. In fact, it has

been one of the pillars of the prediction, in the beginning of the nineties, that an all-volunteer force was not going to be feasible. In years to come though, the general demand for the less-educated will go down. Because this is the very category soldiers tend to come from, this development looks like good news for the military. If one would prefer to rely less on the bottom-segment of the educational pyramid, there is no comfort here.

The second major cause of recruitments problems, can be found in the booming Dutch economy. Growth is high, unemployment low, and for the first time in many years, the government budget has a surplus. Employers in all sectors compete to recruit young people just out of school. Shortages are found in quite some instances, especially but not only, in the public sector: nurses, teachers, policemen; these are some of the most conspicuous professions which cry out for more people. Often soldiers are mentioned together with the latter under the same heading: demanding, underpaid jobs with a bad image. It seems important though to be very precise in comparing sectors and to be very clear about the ones which are really competing with each other. For the armed forces, for instance, the building-trade and the transport sector are very relevant, that is, soldiers versus construction-workers and truckdrivers. One way or the other, the combined effect of demographic and economic developments, puts a lot of pressure on an organization which is dependent on a permanent, relatively large influx of young personnel.

The third factor which makes it difficult to find enough youngsters with sufficient qualifications, is a cultural one: the gap between (post-modern) life- and work patterns and traditional military culture. Even though in official analyses, this may not be exactly the way in which the problem is phrased, from a sociological point of view, this is what it comes down to. (Also see the reasons for 'reinventing personnel', as hinted at in the introduction) In comparison with the demographic and the economic ones, the cultural factor is less easy to pin down, a bit elusive and subject to differing views, in a political as well as in a managerial sense.

The cultural factor is real enough though and directly and indirectly very crucial indeed. To the degree that generational-, and age-effects broaden the gap between life- and workstyles on the one hand and the patterns and preferences within the armed forces on the other hand, the cultural factor only gains in importance. Of course the heterogeneity of youth styles as well as the pluriformity of the military, makes obsolete all too sweeping statements in this respect. Again, the problem is sharpest vis á vis 'real' soldiers, to be trained for combat. The big question is, how difficult will it become, in a country like the Netherlands, to find the candidates for these very functions, and what does it take to recruit and to retain them?

### **3. Seducing the young**

'Surf naar [www.landmacht.nl](http://www.landmacht.nl)'. in the autumn of 2000, that is the text being shown on billboards throughout the country. ('landmacht'='army') A light-green phosphorous shining soldier on a surfboard constitutes the image behind the text. Anyone who clicks this particular website is invited to to pay a virtual visit to the military and figure out for himself/herself whether the real army might have something to offer. If that seems to be the case, a simple e-mail message will put you into contact with recruiters who will show you the way. If you happen to see a spot on MTV, you can also use your mobile phone to make contact. The coupon in your favourite magazine (which covers sport, music, pleasure-seeking, computers), can be sent by traditional mail. If there is an army-job-centre in your neighbourhood, just drop in for

information. You may receive a phone-call from the temporary employment agency which has your name - nowadays they also work for the military.\*

This is an incomplete impression of the current ways in which the armed forces are using all sorts of communication-channels. A lot of effort is being put in to identify and to draw the attention of relevant sections of the youth cohort. Soon after the start of the all-volunteer-force, it appeared that there was no self-evident knowledge of, let alone familiarity with, the possibilities of soldierly jobs. Less than half of the potential recruitment group has a more or less informed idea of what it means to become a soldier. Getting this knowledge across is a permanent challenge and goal for advertising-campaigns.

Communication strategies and image projection are pursued with all kinds of smart marketing. Soaps, docusoaps and documentaries which more or less directly focus on military life, seldom fail in getting some kind of contribution from the military itself. The soaps may not always satisfy everybody's taste, but that is not really the goal: the services are very aware of how to reach which segment of a young public. Bureaus for public relations put in their share of professional advice, for which substantial budgets are being set aside by the Defense Department.

What holds true for smart communication strategies, applies to the whole of recruitment efforts. Over a few years quite an organization has been built, devoted to recruitment and selection, in all of its bigger and smaller dimensions. Typically, this is a joint, 'purple' organization, which steers the recruitment process throughout the military, while paying attention to the particular identities and images of Navy, Army and Air-Force. Advertising is service-specific. Whether coordination and integration already lead to the best possible results, is doubtful. As happens to be the case with other purple projects as well, in practice, integration is not without difficulties, because the services are slow in giving up their autonomy. And when recruitment-targets are not met, this offers extra arguments for re-evaluating its organization. Something which may result in either making it less purple or on the contrary to go finally for deep-purple.

Smart communication and clever organization are important pre-conditions, but in themselves they do not make up the substance of the recruitment-process. A handful of more substantial factors can be considered as crucial for any chance of success. Some of these are related to communication and organization, all of them are intertwined among themselves, and each of them is under construction. From five angles these particular clusters of variables will be pointed out, though not in any detail. It is rather the panorama as such which will be sketched.

### **\*Philosophy: working and learning**

The observation that combinations of learning and working intermittently change place during the life-course, lies at the basis of a philosophy for offering short-time soldiers jobs-with-a-perspective. An important element is a (semi-)guaranteed job in the civilian sector after completion of term(s). As much as possible military expertise is being certificated civilianwise. Right from the start self-study by soldiers is stimulated through a range of facilities. Because a lot of these youngsters have low,

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\* This particular commercial outsourcing still is in its experimental phase. Rumours have it that the success is disappointing. The agencies only have a role in finding candidates. Testing and selection is in the hands of the military itself.

sometimes uncompleted schooling, this civil-military educational mix offers attractive possibilities for self-advancement. On the other hand though, precisely because school and study have been experienced as negative and problematic, this is a vulnerable group as far as self-study is concerned.

Moreover, especially but not only while on deployment it can be very difficult to find room - physically and mentally - to set yourself apart and concentrate on your books and your computer. Practical and psychological bottlenecks apart, the military itself is convinced of the importance of helping soldiers in getting ahead and preparing them for the labour-market. The armed forces have a well calculated self-interest in mediating for post-career prospects, because unemployed ex-soldiers, at a loss with themselves, are the worst possible advertisement. For the moment, no such image exists and figures suggest that the vast majority of ex-soldiers do find a new job rather quickly. Of course, this is also partly due to the booming economy.

### **\*Networks: educational and industrial partners**

In line with the philosophy about working and learning, two institutional networks are especially important for the military: the educational sector and trade and industry (together with part of the public sector). Within and together with certain segments of the school-system, trajectories and programmes have been worked out which aim at getting pupils acquainted with the armed forces as a possible employer. Mid-level schools for vocational training offer courses on learning about the military, not only in a cognitive sense, but also in reality. Short bivouacs for instance give a feel of military life and military organization. All of this is without any obligation to sign up. The latter decision is taken at the end of the orientation-course. The success of this approach is such that the armed forces make arrangements with more and more schools in this particular niche of the educational system. Also, there are experiments going on with offering even more integrated modules and grades, under official headings as 'security' or 'uniformed professions'. This tends to be done in cooperation with police, private security and the fire-brigade.

Just like the educational sector is a logical partner before (and during!) service, trade and industry recommend themselves for post-contract arrangements. In order to materialize certification and job-guarantees, sectorwise special agreements are being realized. A council has been set up to institutionalize and coordinate the contacts between the military and its civilian counterparts. Evidently, a common interest is at stake: a well qualified pool of ex-servicemen and -women will not be overlooked by employers desperately looking for personnel. As holds true for everything in this context, this is a recent initiative and whether it will be successful in the long run, waits to be seen. One way or the other though, it is a logical step in implementing the philosophy about being a soldier as something temporary, from which your career can profit permanently.

### **\*Selection: losing less candidates**

Of those who apply for a soldierly job, one out of two candidates is accepted; for elite units one out of three. Probably part of this fall-out is inevitable, because of physical, mental and intellectual shortcomings. The suspicion has grown however, that some of the standards are too high and too static. And that testing and selection are guided by a somewhat outdated image of what every soldier has to be. On the one hand therefore, more and more differentiation in selection-criteria, depending on function and branch, is being tried for. This also means that anyone who does not pass the test for a particular function, should get an offer for another one. On the other hand, being unfit tends to be looked upon as something which possibly can be repaired. Making



people fit is the name of the game, for instance by giving advice to follow a remedial physical training program at a private sports school. Whoever passes the tests afterwards, will be refunded the costs of the programme.

In the same vein, the armed forces themselves tend to use their basic training for bringing every recruit to the required level, which includes part of those who initially are below standard and strictly speaking could not have been accepted. Of course there has to be some reasonable expectation of success. As a result of this new approach, the final decision about whether to accept a candidate, moves from before towards after basic-training, which gives the latter quite a different status. In fact, basic training already constituted a kind of additional selection, but the attrition has been much too high. In 1999 for the Navy this figure was 16%, for the Army 27% and for the Air Force 12%. Taking in more candidates and loosing less of them, really is an important switch in recruitment- and retention-practices.

As a last example in this context, the advance of ergonomics has to be mentioned. Its long standing goals seem to fit in more and more with the organizational outlook: making machinery and weapon systems user friendly to people whose capacities are heterogeneous.

Again, the degree to which practices like these are going to pay off, is difficult to predict. This is very much smart recruitment though, trying the utmost with and for anyone who wants to join.

#### **\*Women and ethnic minorities**

Differentiating selection-criteria especially is one of the methods for recruiting more young women. Their numbers have been on the rise among short-timers, but overall they still are a relatively small (8%) minority within the armed forces. Correcting their underrepresentation is as logical as ever. At the same time, it is important to realize that overall figures do not tell us much about the actual presence of women within the military organization. In some branches and units (logistical ones for instance), the level of female soldiers and corporals can be at least twice the average.

The overall figure for women is especially under pressure because of attrition among lifers. Family-life and the apparent difficulty of combining motherhood with working as a military professional being at the basis of this mechanism. (As was suggested in the introduction, this is an important issue for new personnel-policies). Very clearly, having more women in your organization is not just a matter of differentiated selection at the beginning. The chance of success, especially in the case of retention, very much depends on the flexibility of military culture in a wider sense.

The overall presence of ethnic minorities within the military is small as well (<5%), but just like women they are spread throughout the organization in an uneven way. If women are over-represented in logistical, administrative and (para-)medical jobs, relatively many boys with an ethnic background will be found in combat-functions.

(If this trend continues, a rather traditional division of labour develops, with white males staying in charge) As a specially targeted group ethnic minorities more and more are on the rise. They tend to be looked upon as promising and crucial for any solution to personnel shortages, especially in the long run.

Surveys among ethnic communities (youngsters as well as their parents), suggest that the awareness and knowledge of soldierly jobs is even lower than among youth in general. There are important differences though between ethnic communities in terms of their affinity with the armed forces: young people with Turkish roots for instance are much more interested in serving in the military than boys and girls from Moroccan origin. Affinity with the armed forces in communities which have their roots in Surinam and the West-Indies, seems to fall somewhere in between. Generally speaking, the level of education among all ethnic minorities is such that they logically fall in with the philosophy which makes the military a road for upgrading qualifications and advancing careers.

As a footnote to this philosophy, a small-sized project has been undertaken, which aims at resocializing boys with a semi-criminal background. On a voluntary basis, they are brought together under a military regime, under the leadership of ncos and officers. Living and working in the barracks, they are taught discipline on different levels, ranging from learning to plan a well-ordered day, to understanding and respecting the basic values and norms of society. Additionally, practical skills are being taught, like welding and motor-repairing. At the end of the program, it is possible to apply for becoming a soldier, but in fact, recruitment is not a central goal of the project. There is even some reluctance within the military to suggest that this yet another way to find soldiers. The general feeling is that such a policy would damage the image of the armed forces by confirming preconceived notions about 'scum of the nation'. Such an image would harm instead of boost recruitment. Rather, one wants to position this project as a token of the responsible organization, which does not just pursue its own goals and missions, but shows an awareness of general and urgent social issues. Among the latter, youth-crime and vandalism stand high on the public agenda. Over-representation of minority-youth makes it into something even more sensitive.

#### **\*Pay etcetera.**

As the simplest and smartest solution to recruitment problems, higher pay recommends itself as a matter of course. Unions of military personnel are not alone in emphasizing the importance of this factor. Of course the Ministry of Defense itself is well aware of salaries and bonuses as instruments for finding and retaining personnel. Very recently initial salaries of recruits have been raised, something made possible by the spin-off of the booming economy and the state-budget-surplus. From some time ago, the distribution of extra money has included the military.

Evidently, the level of salaries and bonuses in comparison with what is being paid elsewhere, is bound to be weighed by potential applicants. One thing is for sure: extra pay for deployment is very generous indeed and surpasses the financial rewards of most other comparable jobs. Few employees of the same age and education will earn more.

There can be no doubt, that money is an incentive which counts. Research on motivational patterns and the process of choosing though, suggest that pay as an independent factor should not be overestimated. On the one hand, a lot of eighteen-nineteen year old are not that knowledgeable about the labour market in terms of salaries. They tend to be rather subjective in judging a salary. On the other hand, there are so many push- and pull factors in their decision whether or not to join, that no financial offer can be seductive enough for brushing aside the rest of the considerations. You have got to have a nose for the smell of military organization, for discipline, teamwork, physical challenges. Becoming a soldier has to fit in at the right moment with where you stand in your life, your educational background, your

view of work in general. How many concessions to your lifestyle are you prepared to make, what does your partner think of the choice you are confronting? All these motives and circumstances do matter and for sure, your salary is among them. Smart recruiters know about all of that and they realize very well that they cannot just hire you.

#### 4. Solutions?

While recruitment suddenly seemed to develop into a real problem, there was never a lack of suggestions about how to solve it. To the degree that the Dutch military more and more felt the shortage of personnel, proposals became ever more radical.

Last spring thinktank *Clingendael* drew a lot of media-attention with its proposal to recruit outside the Netherlands. It was not a very detailed plan, but it proved provocative enough. If France has its Foreign Legion, the United Kingdom its Gurkhas, why not, *Clingendael* wondered, have a Dutch variant in recruiting abroad. Nurses are being found as far as the Philippines and South-Africa. The Navy has employed non-native maintenance personnel for helicopters. So why not change the law which states that you have to be a Dutch citizen to become a soldier? Doing away with this taboo, according to *Clingendael*, would be even more timely now that military missions no longer come down to the defense of national territory, but rather are legitimized as protecting human rights and safeguarding the international lawful order. Admittedly, soldiers in combat-functions are a different story from specialists repairing helicopters. The management of national diversity deep down in the organization, *Clingendael* acknowledged, might be problematic. It would be a pity though to let falter a brilliant idea on practical grounds.

Other radical proposals followed suit, some pertaining to a structural international shift of tasks and personnel. Why not envisage the adoption of a East-European battalion? While weapon-systems would be supplied and/or paid for by the Netherlands and soldiers would be trained by Dutch military personnel, such a battalion would remain integrated within its own national organizational framework. In a way proposals like these are even more radical than recruitment of foreigners, because they imply an international reshuffle of soldiers and capabilities. The operational strength of NATO would not necessarily deteriorate, probably on the contrary. National input would become more specialised. There seems to be quite some long term logic in such a development (see also in the introduction hints about Europeanization). Political and professional sensitivities however are still quite strong. National ambitions and professional pride are at stake.

Almost even more controversial, so it seems, are proposals for internally reorganizing the Dutch military. Anyone who for instance dares to mention the possibility of integrating the Marine Corps and the Airmobile Brigade, in order to maximize the use of soldiers in combat functions, will come under immediate attack. Esprit de corps and elite-identities within the armed forces are not easily stepped over, let alone thrown away. There are not really that many people who have deep-purple as their favourite colour.

Whether as a result of international specialization or of internal reorganization, for the moment a smaller military and a reduction of international ambitions (fewer missions), have no political quorum. Eventually though, mission-adaptation and downsizing might very well be the outcome of a number of intersecting processes, failing recruitment strategies among them.

When at least at the level of public debate radical suggestions are popular, the idea of reintroducing the draft has popped up as well. Conceived as civic service it would also solve shortages in other public sectors. It is a solution though which is more than an decade late, just like other solutions are a decade too early. This is not to say that elements from radical proposals would stand no chance of being used in some way at some time. Right now and in the near-future however, the search for soldiers will go on within existing parameters. With a constant drive to become better at doing it. Philosophy, network, selection, minority-targeting, pay, everything will be under permanent evaluation and pressure. This includes the organization of recruitment itself as well as advertising, in all of its trendy manifestations. Smart recruitment all over has to make sure that anybody interested in becoming a soldier, and who meets minimum standards, gets an offer he/she cannot refuse. On precondition, the offer not only suggests the fun and the perspective, but also emphasizes the seriousness and the risks of being a soldier. Without such a balanced presentation, smart recruitment would be short-sighted and contra-productive.

Looking at the issue from a somewhat broader sociological perspective, one wonders whether really enough thought has been given to the relationship between the current spectre of military missions and soldierly roles on the one hand, and changing lifestyles and work-patterns on the other hand. How congruent are the internal and external images of these roles and how do they fit in with the heterogeneity of how young people want to live and work? To be sure, quite some research has been done on what people look for in jobs, and with what kind of implications for the military. But the question alluded to, probes a bit broader and deeper, tackles military culture and youth culture simultaneously and could be operationalized as an ethnomethodology of recruitment. That is, a very careful scrutinizing of every step in the process of seduction and socialization: what are the mutual understanding and (hidden) expectations, exactly how is communication taking place, with what kind of images, using what sort of idiom?

Such a survey would test and sharpen presuppositions about the compatibility of social and generational developments vis á vis the self-image of the professional military, as well as its public presentation and reception. It would come as a surprise if such a research-program would not deliver spin-off for smart recruitment. At the same time though, it might confirm that especially in the long run, cultural bottlenecks will be as challenging as economic and demographic ones. It might become permanently uncertain whether in the future, with whatever recruitment strategy, enough soldiers can be found and professionalized. But maybe some day this whole approach will be considered a bit old-fashioned: instead of viewing it as a bottleneck it could also be looked upon as a useful and fruitful incentive for a supersmart military.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

This paper has been written on the basis of policy-documents, research-reports, media-debates as well as some former articles by the author himself. Practically all of this is in Dutch. The short list below contains the most important and the most recent literature.

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**RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS AND THE BRITISH ARMED  
FORCES: THE EMERGENCE OF A STRATEGIC APPROACH  
TO PERSONNEL ISSUES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.**

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## 1. Introduction

The British armed forces have an international reputation for their professionalism and a record of success in military operations ranging from high intensity warfare to operations other than war, including a variety of peace support operations and actions in support of humanitarian relief. They are also experts in the means and methods of organising and manning all-volunteer forces, the establishment of which has become a major trend in post Cold War developments in security and defence affairs. It is no surprise that many countries, including France, have turned to the experience of the British armed forces for lessons from which their own Services may learn as they make their own transition away from the Cold War mass armed force structures. For the United Kingdom, due to a combination of internal political and external geo-strategic reasons, the norm has been the volunteer force rather than conscription; its experience of the mass armed force has been a significant but not a master trend in its long-term historical development as a military power. That said, its 20<sup>th</sup> century history of conscription and the shift towards an all-volunteer force in the early 1960s produced some striking parallels with the more recent experience of other countries: for example, the need to continue conscription because of the manning levels required not just by contributing to meet the threat of the Soviet Union but also by the demands of imperial policing after 1945, the fear of not being able to recruit the quality and quantity of personnel required by an all-volunteer force, a concern that societal cohesion would be diluted by the end of national service, and the fear of a civil-military gap between armed forces and society are all cases in point. Other countries, in building their own new all volunteer forces, may wish to draw lessons from the British experience. However they would be wise (as the French have been) also to take into account the dramatic processes of change experienced not only by the British but most other modern armed forces since 1990.<sup>1</sup>

Against this background, the following analysis reviews the major recruitment problems that have been experienced by the British armed forces from the late 1980s until the aftermath of the Strategic Defence Review and the lessons of the Kosovo conflict of 1999, which was published in 2000.<sup>2</sup> Although it considers each of the Services, it focuses in particular on the British Army, which remains the largest in terms of manpower usage and faces, perhaps, some of the most intractable problems today; but this is not to diminish the problems of other armed services. The paper will emphasise the ways in which recruitment problems cannot be considered in isolation from other personnel issues such as retention, transferability of skills and resettlement into civilian society, as well as broader questions of public perceptions of the armed forces, which I group under the term 'civil-military understanding'. It shows how an appreciation of the wider context in which recruitment problems develop and might be addressed grew during the early post Cold War period and suggests that recently this view has become a significant feature of thinking within the policy circles of the MOD and individual armed services, not least the Adjutant General's department of the British army. This appreciation of the wider context of recruitment is part of what I call a strategic approach to personnel issues. It has developed alongside a growing awareness that all people issues not just recruitment are a key concern for defence planners of contemporary armed forces, a perception that was one of the defining features of the British Government's Strategic Defence Review and a series of initiatives that have emerged since 1998. Before examining the recruitment problems and their context over the past twelve years or so it is important to provide a

contemporary context, namely an outline of some of the main recruitment related concerns confronting the British armed forces today.

## 2. The position today: under-recruitment and overstretch.

One of the major features of post cold war armed forces, is the fact that they have had 'do more with less': that is to say downsizing and demands for greater cost effectiveness have coincided with an extension of their missions and their deployment for a wide variety of operations since 1990.<sup>3</sup> The problem of 'overstretch' has become a significant feature of the experience of military personnel and has become a lively topic of political debate.

The core of the Services' current problems lies in the fact that the country is not only asking them to 'do more with less' but there are also persistent difficulties in persuading enough young people to choose a military career, especially in certain specialisations such as the combat arms of the British army.

It is as well to be clear how the term is used in the UK. As SDR notes, the Services confront two mutually reinforcing problems: overstretch and undermanning.<sup>4</sup> Unit Overstretch is caused by a mismatch between available personnel numbers and commitments, leading to a reduction in the intervals between tours and thus less time for training, career and self-development as well as family and personal activities.<sup>5</sup> When combined with the effects of undermanning, unit overstretch produces *individual* overstretch, leading to an early exit of people from the Services, i.e. poor retention. It is interesting to note that in recent years Service personnel, at least in the army, have tended to focus their complaints less on general conditions of service, including accommodation, but more on problems arising from overstretch: such are the human costs of doing more with less in leaner forces.<sup>6</sup>

The problem of overstretch is unevenly spread in the Services. It is especially pronounced in the area of support and logistics. Accordingly, SDR announced that '[e]xtra logistic and medical units will be formed for all three Services and, as they become fully manned, [they] will relieve overstretch in some of the most hard pressed areas'.<sup>7</sup> This will, it is admitted, take time. Furthermore, SDR addresses the overall problem of mismatches between commitments and resources. It asks rather less of the Navy in terms of peacetime tasks, while establishing the RAF in terms of the scale of commitments likely to arise. The Army receives an increase in establishment to meet its existing commitments. This increase, once it is fully manned, will create a 'sixth deployable brigade'.<sup>8</sup> But there is the rub: adding to an establishment at the same time as one is experiencing recruitment and retention problems can make the manning issue worse. Thus, for example, the British army is now 8000 under strength and is unlikely to now be fully manned until 2008.<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to take an overall Service view of the problem of overstretch. This is not only because it is more pronounced in some areas rather than others, but also because the effects on the individual Service person will depend upon his or her perceptions and aspirations. For example, overstretch can, in fact, be financially rewarding and exhilarating for a young single person, while the same experience can cause stress and discomfort for a junior NCO with a young family. Perceptions of stress and what the Services can reasonably be expected to demand of their people are also informed by comparisons made with those who work for civilian organizations.

As mentioned above, undermanning is the second of the key problems facing the Services, and SDR admits that both 'have existed for years and are themselves manifestations of

deeper problems'.<sup>10</sup> The problem of undermanning is one of a gap between actual and planned strengths; it is one of the causes of overstretch. Personnel in undermanned units have to do more, and especially when on operations have to be reinforced from other units, personnel who themselves then have less time for training, family or personal development. The most serious problem arising from undermanning and overstretch is that both can be linked in a mutually reinforcing and vicious circle. Thus, undermanned units produce unit and individual overstretch leading to dissatisfaction with Service conditions and poor retention. As dissatisfied Service personnel leave, their negative perceptions of Service life can exacerbate the difficulties encountered by recruiters. This can lead to the persistence of undermanning and, unless more radical moves are made in connection with commitments and resources, of unit and individual overstretch.

The deployment to Kosovo intensified the difficulties associated with overstretch, which have, to some degree subsided since then.<sup>11</sup> During the autumn of 1999 the British army was '6000 under strength; a fact that has merely been exacerbated by the additional 3300 extra personnel called for in the SDR.'<sup>12</sup> At that time 54.6 per cent of the army in British Land Command was 'deployed on operations with a further additional 31.3 per cent were standing by for deployment.'<sup>13</sup> The figures are much lower now: since mid-1999, attempts have been made to alleviate overstretch of both individuals and units by the reduction of force levels in Balkans and elsewhere. Thus, the percentage of the Army committed to operations including those preparing for and recovering from operations has dropped from 47% in summer 1999 to 27% in late 2000) which is slightly less than the figure in May 1997.<sup>14</sup> (The ideal figure is about 20-25%). Furthermore, the overall problem has been addressed by a more strategic approach to these and variety of related personnel issues, as we shall see later.

Last year and since, recruitment figures have not been enough to make inroads into the problem of the Army being under strength because the numbers recruited only just balanced the numbers leaving. As Ross argues

The infantry for example, had a deficit in 1998 of about 12 per cent, or 2600 of its establishment. This shortfall has been uneven across battalions, however, which has resulted in certain units having additional Ghurkha companies attached to them. Furthermore, some battalions deploying to Bosnia have required bolstering by substantial numbers of TA soldiers... [t]his at a time when the TA infantry was being drastically reduced.<sup>15</sup>

Infantry shortfalls have been accompanied by serious shortages amongst technical specialists such as Signals, engineers and medical personnel. The fact that the seriousness of recruitment problems depends in part upon how severe issues of retention are in the service concerned is a theme that will be taken up later. The other two services have also been experiencing overstretch and this exacerbates any recruitment difficulties they have, which in the Royal Navy are found especially in 'the recruitment of Royal Marines' engineering officers, operator mechanics and other ranks.

Recruitment difficulties not only depend upon the retention context – i.e. how many people leave over and above the number you expect or desire to leave- but also on how the process of downsizing is managed and perceived by those who are considering joining the armed services or those who are in a position to influence potential recruits.

A striking feature of the post Cold war British armed services is that downsizing, such as the cut 'from 60,000 to 46,00 inside seven years, inevitably led to an imbalance of skills and experiences in certain areas.'<sup>16</sup> The Royal Navy was not alone in experiencing the problem that downsizing and restructuring, including the implementation of redundancy programmes, conveyed the message to potential recruits that the military did not have need for them, and this at a time when there was a decline in the pool of young people coming on to the labour market, an increased participation of eighteen year olds in higher education, and the intensification of competition for the 'best and the brightest' from civilian companies which are able to offer attractive conditions of service as well as pay. Again, the services face competition not just for recruits but also for their existing personnel, when premature voluntary retirement (PVR) of their best personnel is triggered not just by the push factor of discontent with overstretch but also the pull factor of an attractive offer from a civilian company such as commercial airlines poaching fast jet pilots from the RAF.

Before we examine how recruitment and related problems in today's armed forces are being addressed it is worth considering how such problems have evolved since the late 1980s and, indeed, how an understanding of how they might be addressed has also developed. As stated earlier, the argument focuses on the experience of the British army. The current 'strategic' approach is rooted in that historical process of re-adjusting the armed forces from Cold War to post Cold War requirements.

### **3. The British Army: recruitment problems from MARILYN to the early post-Cold War period.<sup>17</sup>**

One commentator (Lt Colonel A Loudon) has argued that over the last 12 years the recruitment and related problems of the British army can be viewed as evolving through three broad phases.<sup>18</sup> Loudon suggests that the first period ran from 1989 when the MARILYN report was produced to 1995/96. As we shall see, this phase was marked by the persistent problem of failing to meet the recruitment needs of the Army. The second phase, from 1995/6 until SDR 1998 was characterised by an increased budget for recruitment together with a more aggressive marketing strategy all of which led to greater success in meeting the recruitment targets set for the armed forces. A significant feature of this period was an attempt to target particular sections of the population not least members of minority ethnic communities, a process that has continued with some vigour into the current phase.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, a good deal of effort was spent in addressing problems internal to the army such as bullying, racial and sexual harassment which, it was felt, had a deterrent impact on potential recruits. There was a growing realisation that problem of recruitment could not be solved just by direct recruitment measures alone.

The third, phase, post-SDR, has been marked by the problems of undermanning and overstretch which were outlined in the previous section, one component of which has been the persistent recruitment problems in certain parts of the Army. This phase has witnessed the full development of a more strategic approach to people issues including recruitment. Now there is an awareness not just of the need to look at the links between recruitment and retention, but also to look at all aspects of army as a system and be pro-active in seeing what it can do to attract, retain and develop the best, not least by listening to and where possible addressing their concerns about their conditions of service. However, there is also awareness that, at the same time, there is a need to retain essential basis of military ethos. The essence of the strategic approach

can be summed up as follows: a sense of context and system, an awareness of the need to be pro-active and to link short and long-term measures, and above all a self-critical awareness that one must look hard at what the army is and provides for potential recruits, and not just take the product as a given and focus on how to package and market it to targeted populations. As we shall see, this strategic approach to people issues is clearly needed as, quite apart from new problems, there are already a number of potentially troublesome issues under review or 'on hold' in various parts of the British army or MOD that would benefit from the application of such an approach.

The remainder of this section focuses in a little detail on the first of these three phases. During the closing years (as they turned out) of the Cold War, a good deal of thought went in to the problems of recruiting the number of people required for the British army, which was the largest Service in terms of manpower strengths. This thinking was expressed in the MARILYN report.<sup>20</sup> It became apparent that even with the process of downsizing made possible by the end of the Cold War some of the themes set out in MARILYN were still of relevance. Not the least of these were (a) the problem of the demographic trough (i.e. the decline in the percentage of young people entering the labour market: so that by the end of the 1990s there were about 30 per cent fewer young people than in 1980, and (b) the peculiarities of the armed services as organisations dependent upon internal labour markets.

Thus, small or large, armies are young people's organizations and consequently there is a constant need to maintain the flow of recruits. As the then Adjutant General Sir David Ramsbotham put it, 'We are a living organization and we've got to recruit to maintain the lifeblood.'<sup>21</sup> Thus one factor does **not** change: the need to recruit and maintain the flow in what is a quintessentially young people's organization with a relatively fast labour turnover especially of soldiers. The 'active' part of the army [infantry, Armour, gunners, sappers] need a constant fresh supply of young, fit able people because their 'shelf-life' is quite short.

At the time it was thought important for this point to be made to the public particularly at a time of re-structuring and decline in the size of the Army. There was some concern that publicity about redundancy, placing people on a waiting list or turning away recruits for a year would (as they did) cause problems later when, after the initial adjustment to downsizing had occurred the recruitment tap needed to be turned on and more people attracted once again to the service.

In addition it was recognised that the organization also needed to be able to recruit a sufficient flow of quality personnel as an *internal pool* from which to draw those whose careers (from 21-55) give them responsibility for commanding the army. The consequences of failing to meet recruitment targets then and now are serious: There is, first of all a risk of ageing by keeping people on to make up for shortfall in the flow. Second, shortages of personnel, i.e., over and above any caused by establishment limits can lead to problems of overstretch and poor morale. Third, a smaller cohort in the internal labour pool must lead to risk of lower quality of people selected from it for higher rank. The key conclusion drawn in 1993 was that while the army relies on 'short-termism' in soldier recruitment, the process of recruitment in terms of manpower planning is a **long-term one**.

In 1993, some thought was given to how the circumstances of the British army had changed since the MARILYN report. Clearly the context was rather different in late 1980s: then there was a larger army, with higher recruitment targets, a demographic trough coming on stream, and civilian employers able to bid competitively for the services of young people. In

addition there was a concern that young people's employment attitudes and aspirations would pose a challenge for Army recruiters.

By contrast, during the early 1990s, although targets were lower because of a smaller army, the severe recession had altered labour market conditions and diminished the competitive advantage of civilian employers (a position which would be reversed in the later 1990s). A key lesson remains, recruitment to the armed services is linked critically to the condition of the civilian economy: with economic boom and low unemployment army recruiters will have a difficult time.

It was also felt during the early 1990s that with regard to the motives of potential officers, one deterrent factor was that candidates were looking for long-term career commitment and were put off by question marks over the future of the army and their own future in it. This issue remains an important one and may well provide the current services with an advantage that civilian employers are unable or unwilling to offer. Short service commissions were becoming less significant because civilian career advisers were saying to young people that they would be better off by joining an employing organization first if it offers good career prospects especially if one was not going to University. Employers then and now needed to be convinced that ex-short service officers bring transferable skills other than character, honour, trust integrity etc. i.e. technical/managerial skills appropriate to modern business environment.

During the early 1990s, with regard to soldier recruitment, there were some significant shortages, e.g. recently infantry and nurses. In the case of infantry, during the previous year the army had not been able to make up shortages by encouraging transfers from other corps, a tactic which indicated that the natural shortage had perhaps been rather masked in the preceding years.

With regard to motives, in contrast with officer pool, soldier recruits think short term on the whole and this is what the Army wants given the fast turnover requirement. Infantry problems were linked with the fact that less accredited skills/trades were provided and that this part of the Army is regarded in public perceptions as the one most likely to have traditional discipline problems of bullying etc (90% of press reports on bullying focus on infantry). Also amalgamations and general uncertainties have not helped e.g. in Scotland at that time (1993).

During that period, reflecting an important theme in MARILYN, one strategy for dealing with recruitment problems was to broaden the recruitment pool not least by widening employment opportunities for women, a strategy that has worked well since that time. At that time a number of other interesting proposals were discussed, all of which have a continuing relevance today, seven years afterwards. These included:

1. whether a nationwide and rationalised recruitment would be more cost effective and easier to operate without the regimental system. The Regimental system as an obstacle to the flexible use of the army and a means of addressing family/welfare concerns of army personnel is on the agenda for discussion in 2001.
2. 'Trainability' of soldiers as a requirement: would this involve future changes in advertising strategies? The question of how to balance an appeal to the hard core of the army recruitment pool, many of whom are attracted by the traditional war fighting ethos, with a wider appeal based on transferable skills and new mission such as humanitarian relief remains a core concern for recruiters.

3. Women recruitment? Numbers and participation in teeth? The question of women in combat remains an issue and a decision on whether to lift the formal exclusion of women from the remaining employments in the army (basically armour and infantry) is likely to be made later in 2001.
4. Technical officers and role of Army 6th form college. Providing specialist education for potential soldiers as a means of sustaining quality inputs into the NCO cadres of the army has proved to have been a major success in recent years.
5. PR/display etc: critical given sharp decline in number of population with direct military experience; and effects of hidden army out of uniform because of the N.Ireland troubles. Then as now the problem of dealing with a potential gap in civil-military understanding remains a key problem in British civil-military relations.<sup>22</sup>
6. The need for a pro-active approach: rather than wait for the young to come to the Army, take the army into the schools. How will the schools/teachers feel about this? Here it was felt that there was an opportunity here to make the best advantage of the varied faces of the army - not just 'blood and guts' infantry - an opportunity now created by greater range of tasks facing the army in this turbulent post-Cold War world, ranging from high-intensity war, peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief. Again this remains a key strand in the Army's efforts to build bridges with the youngest elements of its recruitment pool.
7. Particularly in regard to the officer quality problem, it will be important to persuade employers that officers do have transferable skills other than character/integrity etc. Qualifications initiatives in process should help here and would benefit not only recruitment but also retention. The focus on transferable skills remains a key feature of the armed services approach to recruitment, although it is recognised that there is always a risk that providing such skills can exacerbate retention difficulties.

#### 4. *Implementing SDR – a strategic approach to undermanning and overstretch:*

Earlier in this paper, evidence was produced on the serious problems of undermanning and overstretch in the armed services. Since SDR the elements of a strategic approach to these problems have developed quite strongly and have focused on the question of how to break out of the 'vicious circle' of undermanning and overstretch and convert it into a 'virtuous one' a positive self reinforcing circle.<sup>23</sup>

Two questions arise from this discussion. First, while it is admitted that the above difficulties cannot be resolved over the immediate short term, a question remains. Will the mismatch between available numbers of people and commitments (as in extra logistics and medical units) be resolved to the satisfaction of Service personnel, thus leading to satisfactory improvement in morale, retention and recruitment?<sup>24</sup> Second, are the time scales of full manning (RAF 2000, Royal Navy 2002) and the Army around 2004) realistic; and will the conditions be provided to recruit and retain the numbers and quality needed? Here the focus is not on whether the commitment-resource problem has been handled appropriately. Rather the concern is whether, within that framework, sufficient people can be recruited, retained and given attractive enough conditions of Service life that their morale will be satisfactory. Indeed, will this morale be high enough so that when they leave, they



can inform others that a military career is worth pursuing. In effect, can the 'vicious circle' be converted into a 'virtuous' one?<sup>25</sup>

To address this problem successfully, there is a need to think strategically about the different components of personnel policy. In particular, three notions are involved here: First, how the instruments of personnel policy (recruitment, retention, transferability of skills and resettlement and mutually supportive links between military and the civilian community) should be regarded as elements of an overall approach.<sup>26</sup> Second, how *principles* can be constructed to inform decisions on specific policy issues (instead of an ad hoc approach). Third, how the strategic use of policy instruments and principles can be developed to think through the evolution of policy over the longer term – generally speaking the next 15-20 years (and how that policy can be applied, which poses issues of resistance to change and management of change - to include overcoming resistance).

In 1997 according to AG's staff on the Army's HR strategy, it was clear that the main focus was shifting from recruitment to retention. At the same time, there was some awareness that there was a need to think strategically about personnel policy in the sense of linking the various aspects of personnel policy together and developing a vision for the future based on what the future army and its host society will be like. That said, in retrospect, current thinking suggests that compared with today, HR thinking at AG was insufficiently long term in its outlook and was still wedded to dealing with problems and difficulties as they arose rather than in terms of robust principles geared to longer term thinking and planning.

Certainly, today (2000) AG and his staff are concerned with strategic vision in terms of HR policy (as indeed are other agencies, notably the Army's DGD&D) with a focus on the timeline of 2005-15. Also they are seeking to identify principles to underpin policy responses to a range of people issues rather than responding to individual issues in an ad hoc way depending upon the circumstances. Thus, today our focus is on developing an HR strategy for the British army: a set of principles and general themes to underpin that strategy.

In terms of this overall conceptualisation, the factors associated with recruitment, retention, resettlement and transferability of skills from military to civilian life have to be viewed as elements in an overall strategy to producing fully manned, highly motivated (and thus not overstretched) Services. It is unhelpful to focus on one dimension of a policy for people without an overall appreciation of the personnel strategy of which it is a part. Rigid compartmentalising of responsibilities in the individual areas can be unhelpful, not least by 'buck passing' when a more integrated approach is likely to produce better results. To illustrate: improvements in the *quality* of recruits can ease the problem of meeting recruitment target numbers, and the costs of the recruitment, selection and training machine by reducing wastage rates. Better retention through re-enlistment or longer initial service, say from a three year to four year engagement can make major inroads in recruitment shortages and manning levels (although these will not occur immediately). In the case of the army, for example, an increase in the initial engagement from 3-4 years could produce an extra 600 soldiers.<sup>27</sup> This reform has recently been introduced to the British army. Similar results might be realised by allowing personnel to stay in a military career for longer than 22 years, an idea which is under active consideration.

Focusing overly on one dimension of personnel strategy can produce distorting effects. For example, during the first half of the 1990s, the failure of the Army to resolve its



undermanning problem and to manage its retention satisfactorily led to an overemphasis on recruiting targets as a policy response. Currently, (2000) there is a shift in emphasis to retention as the basis for achieving a fully manned service, although this is in explicit recognition of the dangers of letting the pendulum swing too far, thus leading to a neglect of the issues of recruitment targets and recruit quality.

Overstretch can lead to poor retention, which, in turn, can have a negative effect on the public perception of the worth of military careers and thus recruitment. This negative effect can be reinforced if those who resettlement in civilian society have skills and qualifications that are insufficient to make them feel that their military careers have been worthwhile. Managing retention involves ensuring that both partners to what is known as the 'psychological contract' are content.<sup>28</sup> The key point is that the Services need to send people out from the military on a *mutually* satisfactory basis. On the one hand, the Services need to recoup their training and related investment costs; currently, as with pilots, they lose heavily by the premature exit of expensively trained personnel. On the other hand, personnel who leave should be leaving at a time in their lives that they find acceptable. They need to possess skills and qualifications that will assist them in civilian life. It is also desirable that they be equipped with a positive view of the overall benefits of a military career, one that they will communicate to others in the wider civilian community. SDR is right to emphasise that whether ex-service personnel are content or not will depend on whether they were satisfied with conditions, had an enjoyable career, and left with useful skills and qualifications. This is a key theme in the idea of 'learning forces' and the extension of provision for education and training.<sup>29</sup> A significant issue here is the extent to which service personnel are (and will increasingly be) exercised by *opportunity cost* considerations. In a society where people are increasingly ambitious for themselves and their families, the Services' goal should be to be able to say the following to their personnel: "Join us and you will not only go on to a reasonable second career. You will be able to move on to a position that is better than that which you would have been in had you not pursued a career in the armed services in the first place". That is, you did not lose by joining the military. This is, it would appear, the meaning of the commendable point about 'added value in SDR'.<sup>30</sup> The initiatives on learning forces deserve monitoring to see how effective they are in addressing such opportunity cost considerations. Not the least of the problems will be whether employers' fears about 'credential inflation' and the wider debate about standards in school and mass higher education will undermine any gains.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to providing transferable skills, the Services need to create a positive image of Service life as a means of both managing retention and having an impact on *recruitment*. This is why SDR is right to stress the importance of looking after the individual and the individual's family. Laudable initiatives include those such as ensuring that with new accommodation, 'in most instances, individuals of all ranks will be provided with a single room'.<sup>32</sup> The same can be said for the recognition that the Services need to take 'individual aspirations for family stability into account as far as practicable' when managing postings although operational requirement must be paramount.<sup>33</sup> Other matters connected with looking after the individual such as reform of the disciplinary system not least Courts Martial raise wider issues concerning military culture and civilian society, which are addressed later.

In seeking to provide highly motivated and full manned forces, the Services are naturally concerned to widen their access to the potential recruitment pool. By doing so not only will they meet their manning difficulties; they will also meet their legal and social obligations to be an equal opportunities employer while reinforcing their links between the Services and the civilian community. Furthermore, this will also help to reinforce the bonds of civil-

military understanding. By 'civil-military understanding', I refer to a mutually supportive relationship between the armed services and the civilian community; this is a relationship of communication and perception, trust and legitimacy.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. *Conclusion.*

There is still much to be done in addressing the recruitment and retention difficulties of the British armed services. One difficult has been overcome: that is in developing a conceptual understanding of what needs to be done in order to implement the vision outlined in the Policy for People chapter of SDR in the conditions both domestic and strategic that have been identified in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict.

In order to recruit and retain personnel the armed services need to ensure that they offer conditions that are competitive with other employers, meet the concerns of their potential and serving personnel but at the same time provide conditions that do not undermine the military ethos that is required for a war fighting organisation.

A number of issues that will affect recruitment and retention in future are under consideration or having been approved, still need to be implemented and any teething difficulties overcome. For example, the employment of women in combat units - namely infantry and armour in particular - as illustrated in the case of Angela Sirdar in the Royal Marines is of interest here<sup>35</sup>). On issues of implementation, the success of the new policy on the employment of homosexual personnel will depend upon the way in which discretion is applied in this aspect of military discipline and how resistance to policy change is handled. This issue will evolve, as can be seen when one considers the question of housing and partners and how this is linked with wider debate on the attempt to legalise homosexual marriage and rights to adopt children. There is also the issue of accompanied service and thus the debate on whether the arms plot and regimental system has to be reformed. The question of housing and the military community and the extent to which the army should be concerned about the process whereby the military (like the other two services and the RN in particular for last 30 years) has become dispersed into the wider civilian society through house purchase, dual careers and wanting a base for post military life. In addition there is the army discipline and standards paper - and thus the key question of the wisdom and legitimacy of asking military personnel to adhere to a moral and ethical standard higher than can be expected in civilian society. Then there is the broader issue of representing society which has been highlighted in current initiatives concerning minority ethnic communities, is part of broader approach to seeking to make the military reflect a more diverse British society, which is a theme that encompasses initiatives in government beyond the armed forces, i.e. in other aspects of the civil service for instance.

Furthermore, there is the question of the extent to which HR strategy should be developed on a tri-service basis and thus the question of linkage between an army strategy and such a tri-service approach. At present the armed services work with an AFOPS (*Armed Forces Overarching Personnel Strategy*) this involves idea of 'tolerable variation' or not. It is allowed when specific demands of service environment justify (on operational grounds) such variation as in housing policy and accompanied service and arms plot (so far) or not as in case of gays, sexual harassment, bullying and the whole raft of EO policy initiatives. Others that are less army specific include the future of Defence Education and Training and specifically on how far one can go with purple trend. Finally there is the question of the role of contractors on the battlefield, and the effective use of reservists. The more one can

civilianize, contractorise, use part-time soldiers, the less one will have to recruit and retain regular uniformed personnel.<sup>36</sup>

And if, at the same time, one can broaden the pool from which those personnel are recruited, even in conditions of low civilian unemployment and a culture of pride in but practical indifference towards joining the military, the recruitment and related manning problems of the forces can be made manageable in future.

## NOTES

- 1 On The UK see C Dandeker and F Paton "The Military and Social Change, A Personnel Strategy for the British Armed Forces", London Defence Studies 39, 1997, (Brassey's for the Centre of Defence Studies London. 1997), C Dandeker **Policy for People, Problems and Prospects**, Brassey's (Defence Annual 1999). On the broader context see, G Harries-Jenkins, **The Western European Military Establishment: A Re-assessment**, (Final Technical Report, U.S. Army European Research Office, Contract Number, N68171-95-C-9059. August 1996), and G Harries-Jenkins, "Leadership"; D R Segal, **Organizational Designs for the Future Army**, (United States Arm Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Special Report No 20, 1993), J Burk **The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World**, (Transaction 1998), C Moskos, J Williams and D R Segal **The Postmodern Military**, (Oxford University Press 2000), H Strachan **The British Army, Manpower and Society into the Twenty-First Century**, (Frank Cass, 1999).
- 2 The Strategic Defence Review, July 1998, *Kosovo: Lessons from the Crisis*, Cm 4724, London, the Stationery Office, June 2000.
- 3 See C Dandeker "The United Kingdom: the Overstretched Military" in Segal Williams and Moskos, **The Post Modern Military**, (Oxford 2000).
- 4 See SDR, Supporting Essay Nine, A Policy for People, 9-2, paras 9-16.
- 5 As far as the Army is concerned, in recent years the percentage of their personnel committed to operations has risen significantly during the 1990s and is higher than the proportion committed during the early 1970s. Discussions with AG staff.
- 6 Discussions with AG staff. This is not to say that accommodation especially for single personnel continues to be a concern, and SDR does address this issue. See later discussion.
- 7 SDR Supporting Essay Nine, 9-2, para 10.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 As reported by General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the Defence Staff, in a speech delivered to the Royal United Services Institution (RUSI) London, on 22 December 2000.
- 10 I bid 9-2 para.
- 11 *Kosovo: Lessons from the Crisis*, Cm 4724, London, the Stationery Office, June 2000.
- 12 J Ross, "Overstretch in UK Armed Forces", RUSI Newsbrief Vol. 19, No 8, August

1999, 59-60. I would like to thank John Ross (of the Department of War Studies, King's College London) for this reference and for other information used in this section.

13 Ibid.59

14 ibid pages 24-25 6.4. -6.8

15 ibid. 59

16 ibid 59.

17 This section draws on discussions with the then Director Army Recruiting Brigadier (now Lieutenant General) Jack Deverell, DAR, in March 1993, and subsequent discussions with a number of officers from the Adjutant General's department. I should like to thank, other than successive AGs themselves, in particular Brigadier F Viggers and Colonel A Loudon. None of these individuals is responsible for any of the views presented here.

18 I am indebted to Colonel A Loudon (currently writing a defence fellowship thesis in the Department of War Studies at King's College London) for this formulation.

19 See C Dandeker and D Mason, "The British Armed Services and the Participation of Minority Ethnic Communities: From Equal Opportunities to Diversity?" Forthcoming, *Sociological Review* 2001.

20 MARILYN, Manning and Recruiting in the Lean Years of the 1990s., MOD 1989.

21 quoted by C Bellamy, *Independent*, 26/2/93, 5.

22 See C Dandeker, "On the Need to be Different: Recent Trends in Civil Military Relations", in H Strachan, *British Army Manpower and Society into the Twenty First Century* (Cass, 2000), 173-190

23 See SDR Supporting Essay Nine, 9-2,3, paras 12-13.

24 In this connection, one of the financial battles to be fought is how much of a manpower margin over the establishment is allowable for the services. Too lean an establishment leaves too little margin for flexibility and for comfort.

25 I borrow this formulation from discussions with officers on the staff at AG.

26 This is the theme of C Dandeker Policy for **People, Problems and Prospects**, (Brassey's Defence Annual 1999).

27 This point emerged in discussions with AG staff.

28 The RAF developed the term 'psychological contract' in personnel studies; it is also common in Army personnel circles.

29 Supporting Essay Nine, 9-3-9-4, paras 22-27.

30 SDR Supporting Essay Nine, Policy for People, 9-4, 22.

31 This issue is discussed in Dandeker and Paton, **The Military and Social Change**, with

particular reference to the value of NVQ's.

- 32 Ibid. 9-5, para 29.
- 33 SDR Supporting Essay Nine, Policy for People, 9-3, 17. Leave and facilities for improved communication with families are also welcome improvements to Service family life.
- 34 This issue is discussed in some depth in my **Policy for People Problems and Prospects**, (Brassey's Defence Annual 1999).
- 35 Positions in the artillery were opened to women in April 1998. An internal Army study on this issue should be completed in early 2001. The Royal Marines have succeeded in defending their requirement that *all* personnel – even chefs – should be prepared to serve as front line commandos, thus justifying their exclusion of women from such posts. This view was confirmed by the ECJ as justified on grounds of public security and as a measure that was proportional in the pursuit of that security. The same court dismissed the exclusion of women from all posts requiring the use of arms in the German army precisely because it was a blanket exclusion and not proportional. See European Court of Justice rulings on case of Angela Sirdar being employed by the Royal Marines, (26 October 1999) and the case of Tanja Kreil in the Bundeswehr, (11 January 2000). Whether the current exclusion of women from posts in infantry and armour in the British army would be seen as proportional may not be tested in Court if the outcome of the internal review leads to a lifting of this exclusion which, at the time of writing, looks likely. The more important issues are (a) whether the criteria for admittance to armour and infantry will be gender free or gender normed (the latter would face a good deal of opposition within the army, I would suggest (b) how the presence of rather small numbers of women in the fighting arms would be managed in terms of training and career development, especially if gender free criteria for admission were adopted, thus leading to very low numbers of women in these arms for the foreseeable future.
- 36 Some of these issues are discussed in the very interesting document *Kosovo: Lessons from the Crisis*, Cm 4724, London, the Stationery Office, June 2000.



## CONCLUSION





**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN EUROPEAN ALL-  
VOLUNTEER FORCES.**

Experiences and recommendations from France, the UK, Belgium and the  
Netherlands

J. Soeters



## Introduction

Since continental Europe started to think about the abolition of the draft system, there have been warnings about coming problems with the recruitment and retention of (military) personnel. Now, less than one decade later these problems have indeed arrived in Belgium, but even more so in the Netherlands. In France these problems are arising even before the French AVF has really started, whereas in the UK concern with the problems of recruitment is no new phenomenon at all. These are the four countries forming the basis of this summary paper. In all these four countries there is a commonly known lack of personnel in the core of the military (infantry) as well as in various supporting units such as engineering, the medical corps and the signal corps. The problem obviously is not only one of **numbers**, but also one of **quality**. Also in another way, this problem is two-sided: it relates to the entrance as well as to the exit of personnel. The problem is perceived as such a threatening affair that it seems to be creating feelings of panic among politicians, defense policy planners and commanders.

In this summary paper I will try to analyze the problem, thereby focussing explicitly on recommendations. This will give the paper a rather pragmatic approach. I will use a simple economic frame of analysis, which will portion the paper in four sorts of recommendations; these relate respectively to the necessity of changing demand, of activating supply, adapting price and improving communication. Before starting however, I would like to make two preliminary recommendations: "de-dramatize!" and "do away with self-inflicted constraints!" "De-dramatize", because the military has to be aware that recruiting problems are not unique to the military only. In my home city, the intensive care unit of the general hospital has been allocated 48 fulltime jobs; of these 48 jobs only 38 are really filled with personnel. The consequence is that two out of 12 'beds' have been closed; another consequence is that the work load has increased substantially: only three in stead of four officially deemed necessary nurses are present at night.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the military is not the only institution struggling with labour market issues.

My second preliminary comment is to dispose of self-inflicted constraints. Since the military is still a rather traditional organization, there are ample opportunities to solve problems just by creating new – if one wishes: lateral - avenues of thinking. "Think the unthinkable" sounds like the expression of a management guru, but it really may provide at least parts of solutions for current and future problems of the military. In the following, this general recommendation definitely plays a role of importance. Before dealing with the various specific recommendations, I firstly will shortly explain the economic frame of analysis, after which I will provide some empirical information on quantitative and qualitative aspects of the problem. Then the four types of recommendations will be discussed.

### An economic frame of analysis

Recruitment and retention of personnel first of all is a Human Resources issue within organizations. Nevertheless, it is highly connected to labour market issues external to the organization. Not surprisingly, labour economics has highly contributed to our knowledge of these issues, also within the military. In their well-known analytic way of thinking, economists have summarized the recruitment and retention problem of the military as follows:

$E = f(D, U, W_m/W_c, B, RS, T)$ , in which

$E$  is Enlistment,  $D$  stands for Demographic developments,  $U$  is Unemployment,  $W_m/W_c$  is the ratio between military and civilian pay,  $B$  relates to non-material benefits,  $RS$  refers to the resources available for recruiting and  $T$  is the general level of trust in the military organization and military life.

This equation certainly makes sense. It points to demographic variables, which in current times indicate a sharp decrement in the supply of young personnel. In relation to this, unemployment plays a role, to the extent that high (youth) unemployment rates generally contribute to successful recruiting by the military. As a consequence, it is likely that the current low degree of (youth) unemployment is

part of the recruitment problems of the military today. In addition, wages for military personnel as compared to civilian wages as well as other fringe benefits are important factors in attracting and retaining personnel. The recruiting process itself is of significance, as are the resources allocated to this process. The more the defense organization advertises, the more it is known in its role as employer. Finally, there is the more sociological issue of societal trust in the military. Attracting people is not only a matter of money and calculation; it definitely also relates to non-monetary values such as the ambition to contribute to world peace or the wish to experience a number of adventurous years.

To pursue this economic way of analyzing a little bit further, a very simple tool may help. This is the "law of supply and demand", as shown in figure 1.<sup>2</sup> First of all, this figure shows the demand curve, which indicates that the demand for goods, i.e. personnel, declines as the price increases. The more expensive, the less you want to buy or hire. (See Table 1 page 142)

At the other side, the supply curve indicates that the supply of goods, i.e. personnel, increases as prices increase. This mechanism is also easy to understand. At the intersection of both curves the equilibrium price is determined. The current shortages of personnel in the military are represented by the excess demand arrow. The figure can be complicated by shifting the curves in various ways. However I will refrain from doing this, in order to keep the analysis simple and pragmatic. I will use, however, the elements of this figure, focussing on a) the demand for personnel, b) the supply of personnel, c) the price, including benefits, where demand and supply meet, and finally d) the communication process which assures that both curves indeed do meet each other. Before going into that, however, let me try to picture how the situation with regard to recruiting and retention of military personnel at the moment really is.

### **Some empirical information**

As mentioned earlier, recruiting problems in AVF's are no new phenomenon. Long before the concept of the AVF had been coined, the military, for instance in the UK and France, faced considerable shortages of suitable volunteers. Due to these shortages, foreign "legion" troops and colonial forces were employed. This practice continued to exist until far into the twentieth century. Shifts in demand and supply of personnel are therefore no exception, but rather the rule in the military. Even in a very short period of time, spectacular changes in this respect may take place. In the Netherlands for instance, young lieutenants, shortly after finishing their final exams at the academy, were seduced to leave the military with very attractive bonuses. This happened only half a decade ago, in 1995. Whereas at the moment, the Dutch military cannot afford to lose any lieutenant or captain. Why is that?

At the moment, the Dutch armed forces are being confronted with serious shortages. The official figures for 1999 indicate that only some 85% of the overall demand have been filled. However, there are considerable differences: the Gendarmerie (Kmar) has no recruiting problems whatsoever, whereas the Army, the Navy and the Air Force know varying degrees of shortages, going up as far as 25%. These shortages are the result of two factors: lacking recruitment and high numbers of people leaving the organization. Especially, there are deficits in technical personnel as well as in so called "teeth" or combat positions, mostly within the infantry. If one includes the number of enlistees not qualifying for the job, hence leaving the military during their training, these numbers are even considerably worse. There is a fierce debate going on about the specific and up-to-date numbers. In this debate the Secretary of State is sometimes being accused of not telling the (alarming) truth. In addition to this, one points to qualitative aspects of the problem. There is mention of a worrying 'mentality' within some units, due to failing levels of general education among new enlistees.

In the UK similar experiences can be recorded. The British Army is at least 6000 under strength. Shortages are predominant among the infantry as well as among technical and medical personnel. Similar problems are reported from the British Navy. In Belgium, the situation seems to be somewhat less worrying: in 1999 93% of the vacancies were filled. If there were no language-related issues in this country, there would be no recruitment problems in the Belgian defense forces at all, at the

moment. Since the French-speaking youngsters in the Belgian population are still facing high unemployment rates, the readiness among them to join the armed forces is fairly high, much higher than among Flemish-speaking youngsters. Youth unemployment is one of the elements of the equation we saw before. This difference in eagerness to join the armed forces between the French- and Flemish-speaking population might solve the recruitment problem in the Belgian AVF. However, the number of Flemish- and French-speaking enlistees in the Belgian AVF should be in equilibrium due to precarious political reasons.

In France, finally, at least 7000 civilian jobs closely connected to core military affairs (maintenance, logistics and so forth) have not been filled. This is due to the fact that various regiments, to which these jobs are attributed, have been transferred to other parts of the country, whereas the current employees are reluctant to move. With respect to enlistees, there do not seem to be too many problems up to now. However, this may turn into the opposite as soon as the draftees willing to prolong their service as a professional volunteer will disappear. After introducing the zero-draft, the Netherlands and Belgium have also profited considerably from this 'draft-spillover-effect'. The problem, however, is that this effect necessarily is only temporal. In addition to this, there are major concerns about the qualification level of the French youth willing to enlist with the armed forces.

The general tendency is clear. Compared to the almost forgotten times of the Cold war, this tendency amounts to: "doing more with less". Although this development can also be observed in the business sector, it seems to be rather outspoken in the military. As known, the pressures for change have been considerable in the military. Due to the value-for-money-ideology prevailing in defense politics these days and, hence, due to the number of deployments, a vicious circle of under-manning and over-stretch seems to have developed. Besides, there seems to be a mismatch between the various sorts of available personnel and commitments. In the Netherlands, for instance, a mismatch can be seen between the number of available engineering personnel and the demand for engineering capabilities during deployments. In the long, or perhaps not so long, run this situation may create a worsening reputation of the armed forces as an employer. Negative stories, told by veterans, and dissatisfied military personnel demonstrating in big cities, which happened in the Netherlands not so long ago, are devastating to this reputation. Although nowadays the western world in general seems to be in a quasi-permanent 'state of anger'<sup>3</sup>, military personnel demonstrating against government and politics is fairly exceptional. What to do about it? As mentioned, the answer is given in four different sections.

#### **Changing demand is decreasing demand.**

In the UK, the nation with the longest AVF-tradition in Europe, the decline in the demand for personnel since 1975 has been substantial. Even before the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, every five years the British defense sector decreased the number of its personnel with on average some 50.000 positions. For well-known reasons, the decrement in the period 1990-1995 was nearly 100.000. Whereas, the British Defense sector in 1975 employed roughly 600.000 people, their manpower requirements in 2000 hardly exceeded 300.000 jobs. In much the same line, the size of the armed forces of Belgium and the Netherlands has been halved since the zero-draft was introduced. Similar projections are made for the new-to-be-built French AVF.

Apart from the impact of the end of the Cold War, this continuous reduction of manpower requirements can be attributed to various policy measures that have been implemented over the last decades. Some of these policies may be of significance vis-a-vis the current manpower problems. The first of these policies refers to *cutting ambition*. This policy is very simple and therefore easily overlooked. In the Netherlands, it has been agreed that the Dutch armed forces should be able to be deployed in four missions at the same time. The budget and the size of the manpower have been determined on the basis of this point of departure. However, if the people to realize this ambition are simply lacking, one should perhaps consider cutting this ambition. This evidently would imply a decrement of manpower requirements.

A second policy to decrease demand is to continue *strengthening international military collaboration*. To give another Dutch example, one could question why it has not been possible to reach an international understanding as to the manning of the UNMEE-operation in the border-area of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since the Dutch marines are short of personnel, they are not able to sustain this operation for more than six months. An international agreement with other European forces to take over for - say - the next twelve months would have enabled the Dutch to promise future deployment in this mission after these following twelve months. Now there is no international plan in this regard whatsoever. Lack of international agreement and collaboration deteriorates the problem of personnel shortages at the national level. The other way around, improving international military cooperation will undoubtedly mitigate the problem, leading to a decrement of demand for military personnel. As economists say, through (international) collaboration organizations may profit from economies of scale and scope.

A specific form of international collaboration would be to strive for a kind of *international division of labour leading to national specialization*. If every nation would make a choice according to its own strengths, the demand for personnel could probably decrease. At the same time the demand could be more specifically directed towards those segments on the labour market where the supply of personnel is ample. In the Netherlands for instance one could specialize in logistics, corresponding to a traditional strong branch in Dutch economy. Obviously, such a kind of specialization should not go too far, but the idea is important enough not to pay attention to it, despite national sensitivities in this respect.

A fourth policy relates to *technological innovation*. One can safely assume that a large part of the decrement of manpower requirements in the military over the last decades relates to man-machine-substitution. Unmanned flying vehicles, the rise of information operations and soldier modernization programs are spectacular examples of the current technological revolution in the military. Gradually, this revolution will lead to a diminishing need of personnel. To give an example, every generation of jet fighters has more operational capabilities than the previous one and, consequently, every generation is much more expensive. Hence, for every new generation fewer aircraft are purchased and smaller numbers of pilots are needed. This is a spectacular example that does not occur frequently, but other less telling examples can be observed continuously in the military.

A fifth type of policy measures deals with *outsourcing and/or civilianization*. This is an ongoing process which, influenced by the ideas of new public management, has already reached substantial levels of implementation in most European AVF's. The basic idea is twofold. First, many activities within the military (catering, maintenance, computer programming) can be contracted out to the business market in order to achieve more efficiency. Second, civilians are easier to recruit and retain because they are not troubled by deployments and sailing missions. This certainly is a fruitful policy towards decreasing the demand for military personnel. However, it has at least three limitations. First, one should be aware of the friction that may arise between the military and civilian culture. Even real conflicts of interests between the two sorts of personnel may develop as a consequence of a further civilianization of the military. Secondly, and this is related to the previous point, in the process of manpower planning one should always create so called 'rest-slots', in order to provide military personnel with job opportunities in times they are not deployed or on a sailing mission. A third point relates to the availability and performance of contractors under conditions of war or other 'hot' conditions. Although US experiences with contractors during the Gulf War were rather satisfactory, a successful cooperation with the business sector in tough circumstances is not guaranteed. We simply do not know enough about this, because we have too little experience.

A final policy directed towards decreasing the demand of military personnel relates to *increasing levels of manning efficiency*. Considerable differences between national armed forces exist with regard to the number of military personnel per heavy weapon, such as armoured vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, attack helicopters and fighting ships. In 1997, this number was for the US armed forces 32.4 and for Canada 27.1, whereas in Belgium this number was 36.4, in the UK 38.9, and in France (this is before the abolition of the draft system!) 69.2; in NATO as a whole this number was

42.4.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, there are considerable differences in this respect, which ought to be investigated. Most probably, there is a lot of efficiency to be gained with regard to manning levels. Another way of searching for opportunities to improve manning efficiency may be benchmarking with commercial companies. Is it such a strange idea to compare manning levels of navy ships with those of the merchant service?

This closes the list of recommendations to strive for a decreasing demand for military personnel. Some of the recommendations may be rather unrealistic in many people's eyes. However, as mentioned earlier, one should do away with self-inflicted constraints. This strategy probably is not as strange as one might think; it aims at creating smaller but better equipped forces. However, policies towards decreasing demand are only one part of the solution. The next one is certainly as important.

### **Activating supply.**

Here again one should relax dogmas. The general dogma is that new enlistees should have the age of 17 to 25, because in the military young is beautiful. However, in the age bracket of 25 to 35 there may be ample opportunities to recruit lower qualified men for soldier positions. At least in the Netherlands this seems to be the case. On the other hand, apprenticeship systems could be developed to engage youngsters even at the age of sixteen. Another dogma relates to the idea that soldiers should leave the organization after a short-term contract of two to four years. However, to fight personnel shortages it would be wise to reconsider internal recruiting and retention. As much as one regularly decides to keep aircraft and vessels "running on", one could decide to rehire experienced, highly motivated personnel up to higher age categories. In this respect, it would also be wise to enhance the role of reserves even if they are older.

Women in the military still are something like a taboo in many countries; at least it is a subject the military is not at ease with. This peculiarity has far reaching consequences. Women form perhaps not half of the labour population in a country, but they come increasingly closer to this 50% of national manpower. Hence, the military simply cannot afford to ignore women as potential military employees. Especially for support units such as logistics, health service, personnel and administration considerable numbers of female military could be recruited, much more than current practice in European AVF's seems to indicate. But also for more technical positions, such as pilots and maintenance, recruitment among women could be enhanced. Recruitment numbers up to 15% or even higher are realistic, if one may rely on the number of female academy enrolments in Belgium and the Netherlands. However, even more than among male soldiers the problem with female soldiers, NCO's and officers relates to retention. The challenge is to continue to engage women even after they have given birth to children. This requires specific Human Resources measures to which I will turn in the next section. Another issue is to create female role models in the military. In western Europe we are still waiting for the first female general to be appointed.....

As much as women are an underused resource, minorities are underrepresented in most European AVF's. The population mix of western societies is rapidly changing in favour of growing numbers of ethnic minorities. Therefore, it would make sense to tap the potential interest among minorities to join the armed forces. Survey research in the Netherlands for instance has indicated that among the Turkish minority groups the interest in the military is surprisingly high, higher than among the 'original' Dutch population and other minority groups. Whereas among the general population, the number of people showing interest in the military hardly exceeds 15%, these figures among the Turkish Dutchmen go up to more than 30%, including interest in technical and combat units. Apparently, the management of diversity still is a fairly undiscovered terrain in European AVF's.<sup>5</sup>

This latter statement is all the more true, if one would apply it to the idea of engaging foreigners in the military. Historically, there are quite some examples in this respect, and even today the phenomenon of foreign legions (for instance in France and the British Gurkas) is still vivid. Even foreign mercenaries are showing their faces again on various spots in the world. In professional soccer, hiring foreigners has become common practice, and in the Netherlands this practice seems to permeate other



sectors such as the industry and even health care as well. Therefore, it was rather surprising that a suggestion in this direction made by Clingendael, a Dutch institute specialized in the field of international relations, has been scoffed at. Apparently, this type of reasoning is still at odds with national sensitivities. But here again, one should dispose of self-inflicted constraints.

Now we have seen how the demand and the supply curves may be influenced. At the equilibrium price demand and supply come together. Is it possible to influence the price of military labour as well, in order to fight manpower deficits? The answer, obviously, is affirmative, and it relates to price in its broadest sense, including material as well as non-material rewards.

### **Adapting contracts, content and all that...**

In a tight labour market wages for military personnel should be competitive; that much should be clear. In general this will have an augmenting effect on labour costs, which in itself will decrease the demand for labour as we have seen earlier (see figure 1). In the UK the permanent decrease in the demand for personnel in the defense sector since 1975 has been accompanied by steadily growing labour costs. Not surprisingly, the first rise in the budget for the Netherlands' military in a decade is earmarked for improvements of salaries and other material labour conditions. In general however, this is not a matter of payments only. It also relates to system flexibility.

The military should develop elaborated packages of Human Resources Policies aiming at creating flexibility in contracts. One should perhaps develop a so called "cafeteria system" of contracts, in which every (potential) employee may sign a contract according to his or her own choice. Wage itself, fulltime or part-time, pension schemes, leave regulations and possibilities for schooling may be elements of this choice. The European AVF should dispose of the dogma of only offering short-term contracts and never recruiting from within the organization. In line with recommendations made in the previous section, military personnel should be offered opportunities to leave the organization and then to return, which may be of special importance for servicewomen. In addition, combinations of working and learning should be offered, in order to prepare people for entrance on the external labour market.

In this perspective Belgium has developed an interesting policy initiative, which is called MCEM, the "Military-Civilian-Ex-Military" project. Under this concept all personnel (with the exception of a few specialists) will be recruited for an initial term taking them to about 40. Once the age of 40 has been reached, only a limited number of people will be allowed to continue a military career at the top of their grade levels while another group would be transferred laterally to civilian jobs within the Defense department or to other federal agencies. The rest will have to return, through outplacement structures, to the external labour market. This concept has the advantage that yearly less new recruits are needed. But the system will depend on the success of lateral transfers and outplacement guidance.

Two comments may be made here: this Belgian concept is at odds with the idea of the "cafeteria-system"; hence it will be doubtful whether this concept will solve all manpower problems in the Belgian military without creating new ones. Second, - and this is a more general comment applying to all combinations of working and learning -, opportunities to learn at work should be more than lip service or paper work only. Especially the commanders (on all levels!) should encourage learning on the job. They should create facilities as well as an atmosphere within the barracks or compounds, which will enable servicemen and servicewomen to actually spend time on learning during their stay in the military. The importance of creating multifunctional qualifications and transferable skills among military personnel cannot be emphasized enough. However, one should realize that transferable skills may function as a double-edged sword. The prospect of acquiring these skills will improve the attractiveness of a contract with the military, but at the same time, once acquired, these skills will enable personnel to leave the military organization earlier than the organization would deem desirable or necessary.



This latter comment brings us to the organizational equivalent of contract regulations. The first element in this respect refers to the perceived equity in burden sharing. There should be a careful balance in burden sharing throughout the whole organization. However, this ideal may be threatened in various ways. As mentioned earlier, there seem to be mismatches between available personnel and commitments, in the Netherlands for instance in the area of engineering. This leads to a situation where military personnel from engineering units are more frequently deployed than personnel from other units. Obviously, this will create feelings of relative deprivation, if not now then certainly later. Another example of the same problem: duration and frequency of deployments may not be in harmony with the role of young parents. This may lead to a situation – as reported in the UK – where single soldiers and officers are deployed more often than others. This definitely will lead to a lack of perceived equity among these single service (wo)men. The equivalent of an acceptable wage and other material labour conditions is an acceptable job. Deployments and sailing missions will certainly play a major role in the interpretation of what an acceptable job really is. The military should be aware of this, because most likely it will have an impact on recruitment and retention of personnel.

Taken more generally, one could also say that military personnel not only should be offered an acceptable wage and an acceptable job, but also an acceptable working-environment and organization. In this respect it seems important to adapt the organizational culture and structure of the military organization – at least to some extent - to current business standards and management philosophies. Obviously, the military has “a need to be different”, but old-fashioned and rigid hierarchical thinking belonging to the so-called coercive bureaucracy has to disappear, if the military really wants to be continuously connected with society at large. This point is specifically important for the armed forces’ reputation as an employer. This is not to say that the armed forces should start resembling business organizations. But a tendency to turn the coercive bureaucratic model into a so-called enabling bureaucratic model seems to be of paramount significance for the survival of the military as a whole. In the enabling bureaucracy regulations and commands are seen as frames of references and not as ‘nature-given’ eternal truths, to which there is no other acceptable behavior than complete obedience.<sup>6</sup> Besides, monopolistic tendencies and practices should disappear whereas bad rules should make place for good rules, i.e. rules that do not annoy people and that everybody considers inevitable and necessary. In addition, the military should critically examine possible gaps between public and traditional military values, which may come to the fore in cruel baptizing practices, bullying styles of leadership and so forth. Continuation or even the return of radical military professionalism will be detrimental to the military organization as a whole.

Granted, the concept of equilibrium price has been stretched somewhat by not only referring to wages, but also to Human Resources Policies in general and even to the idea of offering an acceptable job and an acceptable organization. But these factors all play a role in determining the point where demand and supply meet. There is, however, still one question unanswered. Are there any improvements to be made in the communication process between demand and supply? The answer, again, is affirmative, and we will now see how and why.

### **Improving communication with labour market and society.**

Recent experiences show that considerable improvements can be made in the recruiting, selection and allocation procedures. The experiences from all four nations – but especially Belgium and the Netherlands - make this perfectly clear. In the Netherlands annually some 20,000 people show a serious interest in joining the armed forces, whereas only some 8,000 wo(men) are needed. However, so many people are lost during the recruiting, selection and allocation process that the number of people actually hired is considerably less than 8000. How is this possible? In general, one could say, the military still is supply- instead of demand-oriented. In the good old days of the draft the supply of personnel was no problem at all, and this situation still is reflected in the way recruitment, selection and allocation are organized. Let us name but a few problems.

First, the period of time between the first contact of an applicant with the organization and the actual enlistment in a unit is extremely long. In Belgium this period varies between 3 months and a

maximum of 1 year, in the Netherlands this situation is not much better. If these processes take so long, it is clear that in a tight labour market many applicants will have found a job elsewhere before the military organization has reached a decision on whether or not to hire. At the same time, the selection and allocation procedures are fairly opaque to the applicants. The recommendation then is as simple as it is important: speed up and clarify the application, selection and allocation processes. If it takes more recruiters to realize this, then this is what it takes.

Second, psychological tests traditionally are highly important in the armed forces' selection procedures.<sup>7</sup> This too is a consequence of traditional supply-oriented thinking, and the price is high. In Belgium one third of the applicants fails the psycho-technical tests, and hence is excluded from the possibility of joining the armed forces. There are indications from the Netherlands that until very recently the number of formally qualified applicants for officer training, failing the psychological tests, was as high as 50%. The result was that not all vacancies, especially in the technical units, could be filled. Obviously, we are dealing here with rituals from former times. This is not a plea to abolish psychological testing, but it certainly is a plea to relax selection standards and to adapt tests to changing circumstances.<sup>8</sup> As known from statistics, one can make two sorts of fallacies: rejecting someone who actually is qualified, and hiring someone who is actually not qualified. The plea here is to relax selection standards, accepting that this may increase the risk of making the second fallacy. If someone is not fit to do a military job properly, it will show during training. Hence, this second fallacy is not very dramatic. Not filling vacancies, however, is. Besides, increasing the second fallacy logically decreases the first fallacy: rejecting people who actually are suited to do the job.

Closely connected to this point is the recommendation to differentiate selection standards, both with regard to physical and educational requirements. In setting selection standards it is important to go for the details, and not to be too general. Selection standards should be in close accordance with concrete and tangible performance requirements. Here again, one should dispose of self-inflicted constraints. In general the manning process could be optimized. Two examples will suffice. First, advertising campaigns could be combined with niche-campaigns aimed at specific target-groups (for instance in the medical sector). Second, the data on the manning process could be centralized – or “purple-lized” if one wishes – in order not to lose those applicants, who fail for instance for the air force but are perfectly suited for a career in the army.

In general, the military should aim at having close contact with the labour market and society at large. In relation to young people it is necessary to develop ways of pre-recruiting or pre-bonding. This may take the form of so called military ‘open days’, presentation of the military at youth events and pre-contracting youngsters who intend to qualify in specialized fields such as medicine and IT (and pay their tuition fees for example). In this vein the French have developed a policy to call up all youngsters to attend one day at a military barrack; this is called: La Journée d'appel et de la préparation a la défense. This policy may seem somewhat exaggerated, but it certainly is an excellent way of raising interest in the military among relatively large parts of the youth population.

In relation to society at large, it is important to intensify relations with all kinds of institutions: employers' associations, educational institutes, labour market agencies and specifically the media. The military traditionally have practiced a communication style that in communication- and PR-theory is typified as “Oister-strategy”. In the current days of transparency and responsibility, however, organizations in general and the military in particular should develop a “bridging-strategy” of communication. As I once proposed, the strategic apex of the military should follow the role-model of the ‘soldier-communicator’.<sup>9</sup> The general challenge for this ‘soldier-communicator’ is to improve the AVF's status in society.

Such an open communication style may also be suited to develop close connections with the “Home-front” (parents and partners), and with the veterans. Principally, veterans may be considered the ambassadors of the military, and the remembrance of their work should therefore be kept alive. Veterans spreading negative signals about the military should be prevented at all costs. An example of such negative signals has been observed in the UK where a fairly large proportion of homeless people appear to be veterans of the British Army. Remembrance of veterans' work should therefore be kept

alive, however not only in a ceremonial sense. This should especially be done in the way the military helps former personnel to develop an acceptable life after volunteering for the armed forces. The experiences of former servicemen and women are the best arguments to convince new people that joining the armed forces is a right choice.

This closes the list of recommendations. Lacking recruitment and retention of military personnel is not an issue that will soon disappear from the agenda. This matter has a structural character, and therefore it requires all the effort one can think of. This effort should consist of packages of policies. One single measure will not suffice; this much I hope to have made clear.

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## NOTES

- 1 Information provided by my sister-in-law Germaine Schreurs, who is an experienced ICU-nurse at this hospital.
- 2 See for instance: R.G. Lipsey, D.D. Purvis, G.R. Sparks and R.O. Steiner, *Economics* 4th edition, Harper and Row, New York, 1982
- 3 G. Esler, *The United States of Anger*, Penguin, London, 1998
- 4 Information provided by the British MoD.
- 5 J. Soeters en J. van der Meulen, *Managing Diversities in the Armed Forces. Experiences from nine countries*, Tilburg UP, Tilburg, 1999
- 6 J. Soeters, Culture in uniformed organizations, in: N. Ashkanasy, C. Wilderom and M. Peterson, *Handbook of Organizational Climate and Culture*, Sage, London, 2000, 465-481
- 7 N.M. Hardinge, Selection of military staff, in: N. Anderson and P. Herriot (eds.), *International Handbook of Selection and Assessment*, John Wiley, NY, 161-181
- 8 See note 7 for more information on the need to adjust tests to educational and technological (IT) trends.
- 9 J. Soeters, Valeurs militaires, valeurs publics: vers le soldat-communicateur, in: B. Boëne and Chr. Dandeker (eds.), *Les armées en Europe*, La Découverte, Paris, 1998, 271-286

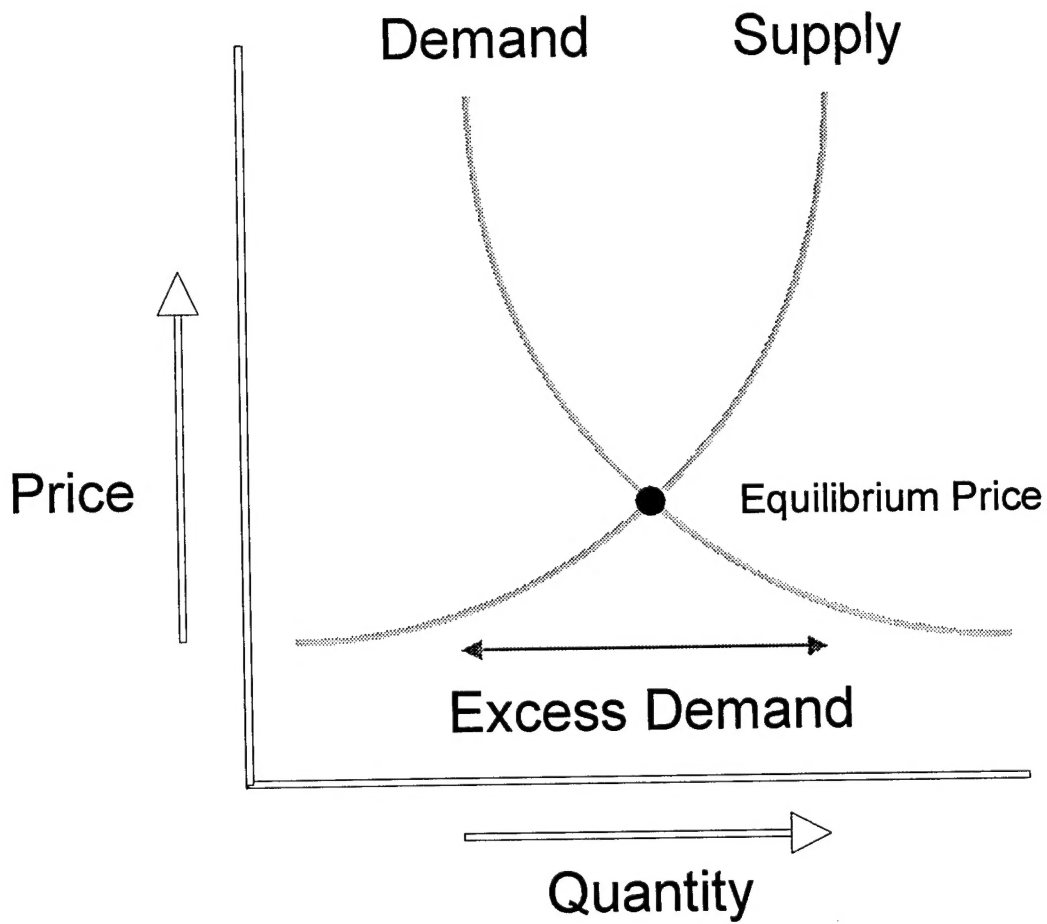


Figure: Demand and Supply curves

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